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FEBRUARY 1985

Mel Lewis

MARK BRZEZICKI
of Big Country

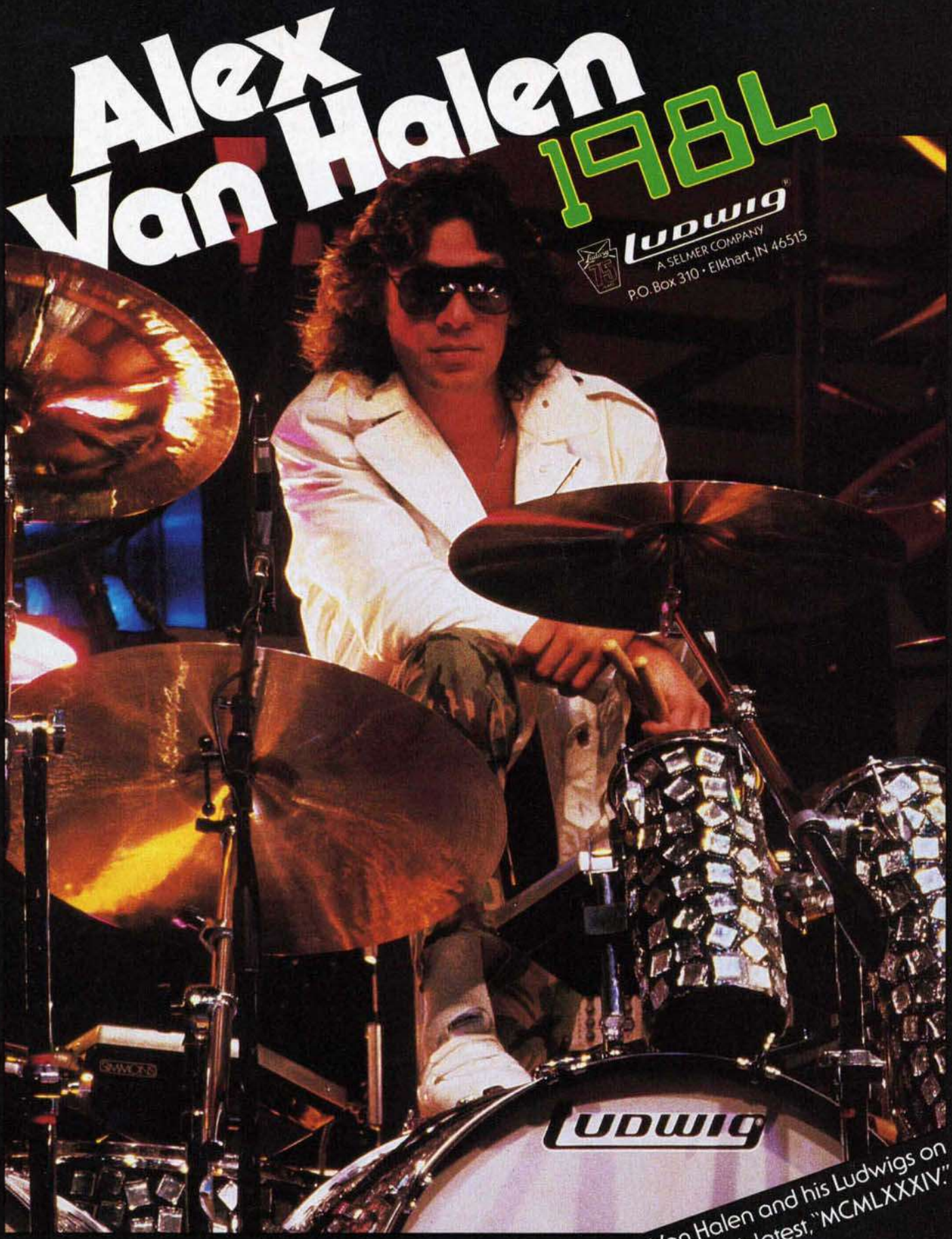
Plus:
George Marsh

Steve Gadd Solo Transcription

Elton John's
NIGEL OLSSON

Drums In The Movies

Inside Meinl



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Cover Photo by Rick Mattingly

FEATURES

MEL LEWIS

It was 19 years ago this month that the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra started playing Monday nights at New York's Village Vanguard, and the band—now led solely by Lewis—is still there. Mel has had a lot of time to observe what is going on in jazz and jazz education, and here he shares his thoughts on those subjects, as well as his feelings about the importance of knowing the traditions of the instrument.
by Rick Mattingly 8

MARK BRZEZICKI

Although this is the age of electronics, Mark Brzezicki, drummer with Big Country, feels that it is important to have a real drummer and a real drum sound in today's music. In this exclusive interview, he reveals the means by which he ensures the prominence of the drum part in Big Country's music, and describes his approach to recording when working with artists such as Pete Townshend, Frida, and Roger Daltrey.
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MICK AVORY

When the Kinks emerged in the mid '60s as part of the "British Invasion," few people would have thought that any of those bands would still be around 20 years later. But the Kinks—with most of the original members, including drummer Mick Avory—are still going strong. Avory discusses his drumming style as he looks back at his years with the group.
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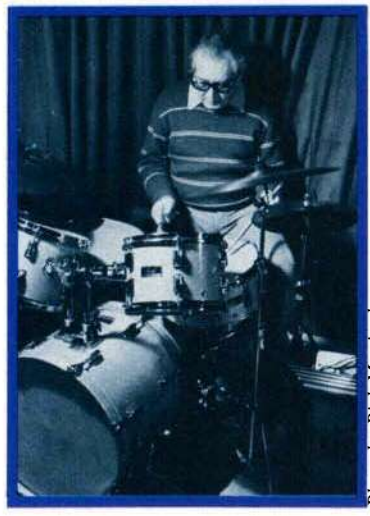

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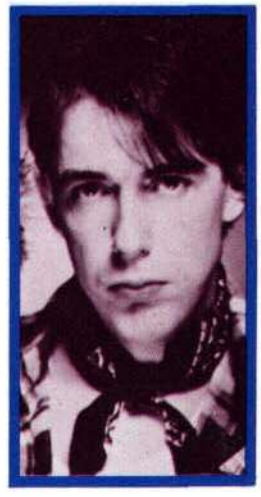

Photo by Ebet Roberts

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EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Facing The Future

Three years ago this month, *MD* published a special report entitled *The Drum Computer: Friend Or Foe?* The article actually came about as a result of the controversy surrounding the new devices, and as drummers began to suspect that the age of automation had finally hit home.

A subtle undertone of caution seemed to prevail in that report. Jeff Porcaro strongly recommended that drummers not ignore the computer. When Jim Keltner was asked if the machine necessitated programming by a drummer, his response was, "Absolutely not." And Harvey Mason, who stated that drummers might be needed for more believability, also felt that non-drummers would probably do equally well with the programming.

Three years later, we now find that the drum computer is showing up on more and more recordings, and a widening number of studio operators, arrangers, composers and producers are becoming aware of its uses. From their point of view, the advantages are numerous. The computer shows up on time, offers hundreds of possible drum sounds, gets a "good sound" faster, and can closely simulate the sound and style of a particular player.

What about the financial aspect? Well, why would a contractor hire four percussionists, when a tambourine, cabasa, cowbell, congas, and everything but the kitchen sink, could be obtained from one very cooperative machine? For that matter, why even hire individual players for demos, jingles or overdubs? The machine saves time and money for these people, and looking at it from this perspective, one clearly sees the threat. This is not a good situation for drummers.

Of course, we've been told that it takes a drummer to program a drum computer, and though this may be true in some cases, it certainly isn't so in all. Just last month in *MD,* Jimmy Bralower, a drummer/computer specialist in New York, told us that he often sees keyboard players, guitarists and songwriters programming the computer in the studios. The truth of the matter is, anyone with a halfway decent rhythmic sense can do surprisingly well with it, and it remains to be seen what long-term effect this will have on the status of the recording drummer. Perhaps it's safe to assume that work which has been in the hands of a select few to begin with, will narrow down even more, as computers become more firmly entrenched on the studio scene.

Not everyone will be adversely affected. Those players who currently have a firm foothold in the studio will simply substitute the computer for a drumset when they're requested to do so. Also very likely to benefit are those farsighted individuals who have dealt with, and even specialized in, the new technology.

The point is, we really can't resist the trend, and we surely can't stop it. This is the wave of the future. If anything, the sophistication of the new technology will even improve in time to come. Understanding this, do we really have any other choice *but* to deal with it by getting involved? 1 doubt it. As we survey the situation three years later, maybe now it's time to pay careful attention to the words of Jim Bralower: "Those who see the future have no problem with it. Those who want to wear blinders are going to have trouble. It [the computer] is not going to take the place of drums, but it's *here,* and it's part of the percussion family now. Certainly I would suggest that drummers see the machines as their friends instead of their enemies." Sound advice, indeed.

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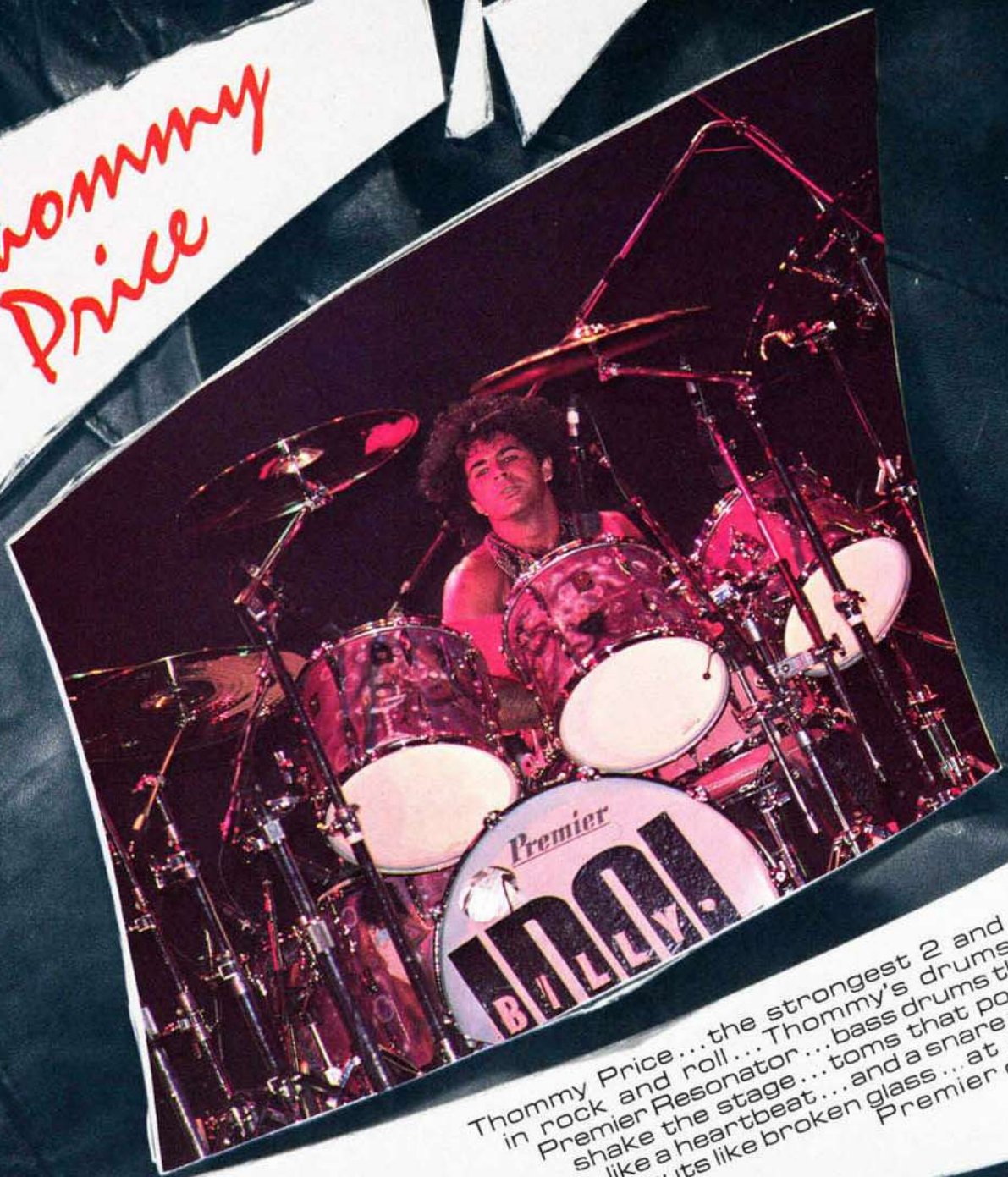
Thommy Price



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READER'S PLATFORM

ROGER TAYLOR

Thanks for the feature on Roger Taylor of Queen. Roger is one of the most underrated drummers in rock today, as well as one of the most innovative. Taylor's drumming influenced me to become a drummer. It seems that on every album he comes up with something new.

I got the feeling that Taylor did not mind answering Robert Santelli's detailed drum questions, even though he is reluctant to talk about his primary instrument. Taylor may claim that he does not know much or care to know much about drums, but I got the impression that he knew quite a lot about acoustic as well as electronic drums. All in all, it is a great article on a great drummer.

Kelly R. Mullins
Charleston, WV

I respect and admire Roger Taylor's playing ability and knowledge. However, there is one thing he said in your interview that is wrong. He said, "With drums, you either have time or you don't. If you don't have it, there's no chance that you'll ever be any good, really." It is true that without good time you will never be any good. But good time is something that *can* be developed. One year ago, my time was awful, but by playing with a metronome, counting aloud, and having more alertness, I have improved tremendously.

Don't let those negative statements get you down; just hang in there.

Steve Trice
Lynchburg, VA

LES DEMERLE

I would like to thank *MD* and Scott K. Fish for the excellent and enlightening article on Les DeMerle in the October issue. Les' concepts on attitudes cannot be stressed enough, and my opinion (and we all have one, don't we) is that more drummers ought to take heed, and try to apply them to their playing and gigs.

Jerome Abraham
Atwater, CA

DEMERLE VS. HIRST

First of all, let me commend you on the editorial, photographic and musical excellence of *Modern Drummer.* In retrospect, and as an avid drummer for more than 30 years, I find it hard to believe that, until the publication *of MD,* there was no magazine about drumming, written by drummers and for drummers.

Upon purchasing your October '84 issue, I immediately turned to the interview of Les DeMerle by Scott Fish. The comments of Mr. DeMerle undeniably reflect the highly musical sounds which emanate from his recordings. It is encouraging, indeed, to know that many young, aspiring drummers will read this interview and benefit from Mr. DeMerle's musical intelligence, background and integrity.

Conversely, the interview of Rob Hirst by Bill Wolfe could, I fear, serve as a detriment to those same aspiring, and possibly impressionable, drummers. His comments in the first paragraph on page 42, regarding "the use of gravity to hit harder," "big cymbals that can take a great, big wallop," and "the use of squash racket toweling grips" are, in my opinion, sheer, ludicrous nonsense. For the sake of fair play, I listened to recordings of Rob Hirst and I can attest that his comments also reflect the sounds which emanate from his recordings.

My intent is *not* to criticize, but to implore drummers to use common sense and intelligence in their musical development. Long live Les DeMerle!

Chuck Murray
Sunnymead, CA

ROB HIRST

Finally Rob Hirst gets the attention he well deserves *(MD,* October '84). He's definitely *the* most energetic and explosive drummer I've ever seen. He's also the perfect example of a drummer who drums for the band first, himself second. Congratulations to Bill Wolfe on such an excellent interview.

Matthew Haney
Beaconsfield, Quebec, Canada

BEARING EDGE REPAIR

I have discovered an additional technique for correcting an uneven bearing edge on a wood shell. Turning the drum on a flat board covered with sandpaper would not fully correct the defect on one of my drums. A depression was left when a section of the central ply cracked away. There is a limit to how far you can go in sanding down the bearing edge, and I feel that the alternative of building up the depression could be the answer in some cases. I believe this technique could also be used to fix a dent in the bearing edge. I used *Elmer's Professional Carpenter's Wood Glue* to build up the depression, using the following steps. (I suggest you practice on a piece of wood such as quarter-round molding to develop the technique before starting on the drum.)

1. Spread glue into the depression with a flat toothpick. Cover the entire area with a layer of glue no more than 1/16" thick.
2. During the next five minutes, use the toothpick to blend the edges of the glue into the surrounding area.
3. Let dry for two to three hours.
4. Rub your finger across the area to feel for a hump or depression.
5. Sand lightly with #220 sandpaper on a sandblock. If the glue has dried leaving a hump, sand until the glue becomes even with the bearing edge. If the depression is not fully filled, an unsanded area will be visible after sanding.
6. Repeat the above process, if necessary, layering until the depression is filled.
7. Let dry overnight before mounting the head.

Chips or dents in the bearing edge can be filled in this way prior to turning the drum on a flat surface covered with sandpaper, so that less sanding will be required to even out the edge. I hope your readers will find this information worthwhile.

David Dudine
Jasper, IN

RUSS KUNKEL

I just finished reading the interview with Russ Kunkel (Nov. '84 *MD).* To me, this article is a perfect example of how much your magazine has grown since you first interviewed Russ back in 1978. Russ has been one of my favorite drummers for many years because of his beautiful style and drum sound. This updated interview was long overdue.

Over the years, the *MD* staff has been very successful at learning how to get beneath the surface of our favorite musicians, thus allowing us to get to know them as real people. You've come a long way.

Long live Russ Kunkel, Jeff Porcaro and people like them. The attitudes they project epitomize a truly professional approach. They deserve their success and are an inspiration to us all.

Jim Benton
Atlanta, GA

COZY POWELL

The Cozy Powell article (Nov. '84 *MD)* was great. He showed maturity and intelligence in dealing with the business side of rock 'n' roll, and yet he still possesses that special devotion to, and love for, his instrument and his music. He just seems to have a good, positive attitude—something a lot of musicians could use.

Chris Dunlap
Sterling Heights, MI

THANKS TO ERIC

I would publicly like to thank Eric Carr for chatting with me on the telephone for a couple of minutes. Most celebrities wouldn't even consider talking to someone they don't even know. I want to thank Eric for taking time from his wild schedule with Kiss to talk drums and cymbals with me. I also want to thank *MD* for that great article on Eric in the September "83 issue.

Greg Patterson
Phoenix, AZ

continued on page 87

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ASK A PRO

AYNSLEY DUNBAR

Q. You were probably the very biggest influence on my musical career, and still are. Where have you been? Those who look up to you have missed you. What are you doing now, and what setup are you using?

Rick Holder
Mineola, TX

A. First, thanks for the kind and complimentary words. As far as where I've been, I've been living on the West Coast, first in San Francisco and now in LA. Basically, I've been relaxing and practicing after almost 20 years on the road. I've been laying down some tracks with Dweezil Zappa in his father Frank's studio, and I've been playing occasionally with some friends at a small club in Hollywood called The Central. Recently, Jeff Porcaro asked me to participate in a direct-to-disc percussion ensemble project that will include Jeff, Emil Richards and several others. By the time you read this, I may be on the road with Paul Butterfield; that's another project that's in the air at the moment. I'm also thinking about putting something of my own together in L.A., but I haven't found too much that's interesting so far.

The kit I'm using at the moment is a black Ludwig set that includes 9x *10, 10x 12, 12* x *13 and 13* x *14 rack toms, a 16x16 floor tom and two 16x22 bass drums. The snare is a 6 x 14 smooth brass shell. All the toms are double-headed. My cymbal setup changes often, depending on what I'm doing. All my cymbals are Zildjian, and I generally use two large crashes on either side of me, then a Chinese and a swish, tilted and in a bit closer, then two smaller crashes (16" or 17) at either side of my rack toms, and anywhere from an 18" to a 22" ride. Generally I use standard 14" hi-hats.*

JIM KELTNER

Q. I've enjoyed listening to you on Phil Driscoll's *Covenant Children* and *Celebrate Freedom* albums. Could you tell me what equipment (drums, heads, cymbals, etc.) you used on those albums? Did you enjoy working with an annointed musician of God like Phil Driscoll? You have great taste in your playing with Phil; keep it up.

Corey Pinney
Bartlesville, OK

A. On the albums you mentioned, I used Pearl drums with Remo Diplomat *and* Ambassador *heads, Paiste cymbals, and a Simmons* SDS5. *I enjoy working with Phil very much. The fact that he's glorifying God in his music makes it all the more enjoyable!*

JOE FRANCO

Q. While reading your *Rock Perspectives* article entitled "Breaking Up The Double-Bass Roll" (Sept. '84 *MD),* I became curious about the rack tom setup and hardware shown in the picture of you and your drumset. What type of hardware do you use? Is this currently available, or is it a custom design?

Steve Ledingham
Urbana, OH

A. The hardware system was designed for me in Canada by Mark Gauthier. I met him in Vancouver while rehearsing for a Chilliwack tour. At the time, it was one of his first designs, but he has since marketed the system under the name Collarlock Canada. You may find out more about it by writing him at 13373 64A Avenue, Surrey, British Columbia, V3W 7C8, Canada, or by calling (604) 591-2472.

DANNY SERAPHINE

Q. I recently saw you in concert in Austin, Texas, and was wondering why you change your snare drums between songs. I'd also like to know more about your setup in general; it sounded fantastic.

John A. Martinez
San Antonio, TX

A. As to why I change my snare drums, it's because for certain songs, such as "Hard To Say I'm Sorry," I prefer to use a deep snare to reproduce the deep backbeat which was the sound I got on Chicago 16. *Otherwise, I prefer a thinner snare to get more of a "crack" to cut through the band. I also prefer the response for up-tempo songs.*

Currently I'm playing a double-bass setup, with 20" and 22" bass drums. My rack toms are 10", 12", 13" and 15", and I use a 14" floor tom. I use either 5/2 or 71/2x14 snares. My cymbals include a 20" ride, 14" hi-hats, and 16" and 18" crashes. I also have Countryman pickups mounted inside my drums to trigger my Simmons head, and a Clap Trap *for my snare. I have a switchbox next to me with four presets: all Simmons; just Simmons bass and snare; just Simmons toms; and acoustic drums only (Simmons off).*

STEVE SMITH

Q. Why do you switch from matched to traditional grip on certain songs? What kind of right foot exercises do you do to keep in shape to play patterns (such as on "Dixie Highway") that require quick doubles throughout? And why do you use what looks like a backwards right hand grip on the ride during certain songs?

Vince Grant
Alderwood Manor, VA

A. I've always played traditional grip, so it's very comfortable. I switch only for feel. Some things feel better with matched grip, and others feel better with traditional. It has nothing to do with getting around the drums.

As far as right foot exercises, I don't have any. I just practice what I want to play. That way, I'm practicing and playing the same things, so it keeps me thinking in a musical way, instead of a technical way.

For the right hand grip, I sometimes turn my hand over to get more wrist into my stroke.

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by Rick Mattingly

THE Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra and the Village Vanguard just seem to go together. For one thing, they both represent longevity. The Vanguard is the oldest club in New York City; Mel's band has one of the longest-running gigs in jazz—19 years of Monday nights at the Vanguard. For another thing, they are both grounded solidly by tradition, but aren't afraid to look towards the future. The Vanguard's walls are covered with photographs of the great jazz musicians who have played there—people such as John Coltrane, Bill Evans, Thad, Hank and Elvin Jones, Charles Mingus, Roland Kirk, Horace Silver and Tony Williams. Many of these artists continue to play at the Vanguard, but you'll also hear the new jazz stars, such as Wynton Marsalis. Similarly, Mel Lewis & The Jazz Orchestra can be expected to play some of the same arrangements they've played since the days when the band started as the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra; they also play new music.

Most important, both the Vanguard and the Jazz Orchestra have strong leaders: Max Cordon and Mel Lewis. Cordon has managed to pull off a difficult balancing act: It's hard enough to keep a club going in New York without also providing a place where jazz musicians can develop their art without having to compromise for commercial purposes. But the Vanguard is such a place. Go there whenever you want; you'II hear real jazz. Gordon has achieved this by combining a true love for good music with a strong business sense. He doesn't compromise either of them. Neither does Mel. He knows as well as anyone that musicians have to eat, and he'll do what he has to in order to make a living. But when it comes to his own band and their music, Mel won't put up with anything that he feels is inferior, and he will gladly tell you why he thinks something is inferior.

Mel can come across as being rather harsh in his comments and criticisms—especially in print. But when you get to know him, you realize something very important: There is really no malice or hostility in anything he says. Mel is merely calling it the way he sees it. Sometimes, if you look closely, you'II see a twinkle in his eye when his words are seemingly their most cynical. He's not condemning as much as he's just trying to provoke people into thinking about what they're doing, and why they are doing it. Musically, he does the same thing with his band as he occasionally plays unexpected things behind them, forcing them to keep their minds and ears open to what is going on. Mel knows what's going on. He cares about the music too much not to.

RM: Around 15 or 20 years ago, jazz education hit the schools. It seemed like every school had a jazz program, which usually meant big band. As a bandleader, now that this has gone on for a while, have you noticed a significant improvement in the capabilities of young players, and an increase in the number of capable young players?

ML: Well, there has certainly been an increase in the amount of young players. The only problem has been that, through this whole time, in almost every band that I've ever heard, the rhythm sections were the worst part. I noticed that the drummers, except for a few here and there, were caught up in the rock race. They were young and this was the only kind of music they were into. They didn't have the opportunity to hear most of the major big band drummers, whereas when I came up, I got to hear everybody. There were so many drummers to listen to, and so many varieties of styles, techniques and sounds from the different types of bands. But we eventually got down to such a small amount of bands, leaving Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Jake Hanna and myself as the four major big band drummers around. The tendency was for young drummers to lean towards Buddy, which was a natural thing and I appreciate that. Louie, of course, had another special thing going because he utilized a two bass drum setup. I was the bebopper—the small-group approach, which was another style. Jake came out of the Dave Tough school, which was another good way to play. We all did our thing extremely well, but we weren't out there as much as we could have been. The opportunities weren't around for young drummers to hear us.

I noticed that the only things the young drummers could play well were the big band rock arrangements. It seemed like we were going to have a whole barrage of drummers, but nobody coming up who could swing in a real jazz fashion—real big band drumming. However, there were exceptions. Steve Houghton came out of North Texas, went on to Woody's band and did a great job. Peter Erskine went on to the Kenton band. Then along came a few other people. Danny Gottlieb was down in Miami playing jazz. So here and there, I heard a few people who had potential, but the basic element at the time was wrong. I'm not going to blame the drummers for that; I'm going to blame their teachers for going along with the kids and just playing the rock-oriented music. We have enough rock music going on as it is with the real rock bands. Big bands should have leaned towards training them to play the old arrangements—"Song Of India," "A Train," "One O'Clock Jump."

I recently saw two bands performing on a television show. Both bands were from Indiana University—David Baker's groups. Each band was alternating two drummers. They were playing arrangements that called for backbeats on quite a bit of stuff, and one guy—*one guy*—played his backbeat with the traditional grip. He was the only one who swung out of the four drummers. The other three were playing the backbeats with the matched grip and it came out as stiff as a board.

I know there are pros and cons on this traditional and matched gripbut matched grip doesn't work when you're playing jazz of any kind. You can yell and scream, and argue and argue. The great jazz drummers all *know* what they're talking about, and every one of them knows that no drummer is going to swing in a traditional way with matched grip. It just doesn't work. I know that the reason these young drummers are using matched grip is because they are playing more rock than jazz. They're working their way through school, they're playing gigs, and most of the gigs are rock oriented. I can appreciate that. There was a time when I would have said, "Oh, that stinks," but I won't say that anymore, because I realize that that's just the way it is and there is room for everything. But if you're going to play with a big band for four years in high school, and then

Photo by Rick Mattingly

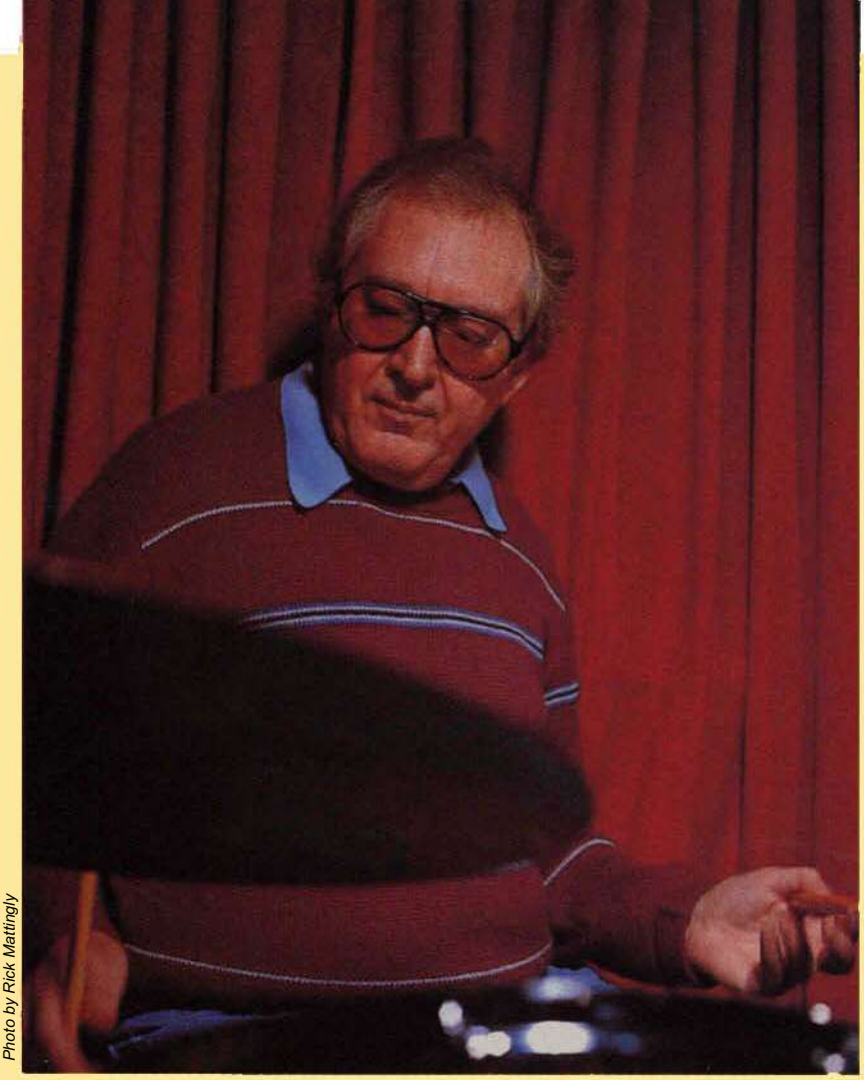

Photo by Rick Mattingly

go into college and play with the stage band there, then do it right. That means listen to what went before and listen to yourself. Listen to the old guys and wonder, "Why can't I get a feel like they got? Were they that great?" No, they weren't that great. It's just that you're not doing the right things.

I was astounded to see two good bands and four drummers, and only one of them swung. But it proved a point. Through these last 20 years that you're talking about, the reason that we're not producing enough good big band drummers is because somebody is not doing his or her homework—which turns out to be not one somebody but a whole lot of somebodies. Maybe they figure, "Well, there are not that many big bands to play with and I'm going to have to make my living playing rock." Well, we had to make our livings doing all kinds of things too, including playing rock. And I still say that if you learn the right way it won't affect anything. I went to see Miles Davis just recently, and I listened to some fine rock drumming with a jazz feel by Al Foster. He was playing traditional grip and it was certainly loud enough, but it was loose and it swung.

"A BIG BAND IS ONLY A BIG BAND WHILE THE WHOLE BAND IS PLAYING. WHEN A SOLOIST STANDS UP TO BLOW, THAT'S A QUARTET NOW."

I got into something that might not even be answering your question very well, but I've heard a lot of college bands lately and there's just a dearth of big band drummers, even though we've had this big stage band movement. So in answer to that part of your question, yes there are a lot more, but brilliant ones, no. There is not enough history in the playing. The young drummers have not spent enough time listening to Papa Jo, Sid Catlett, Dave Tough, Don Lamond, Gene Krupa, and the people who really set the pace.

I feel that, if a big band era started tomorrow and we had about 40 bands to organize, there would be panic among bandleaders. I don't think we could dig up 40 really decent big band drummers. I don't understand that, but I know it could be turned around very easily. More and more young students are coming to me to listen and to find out what's going on. The first thing you have to ask them is, "Who did you listen to? What do you really know?" And the reading thing—they learn to read, but I notice that when I see the concerts, they're *still* reading. I ask them, "Why are you still reading? You've had dozens of rehearsals." The drummers should be sitting up there knowing that music inside out. There is no reason to be sitting there reading anything. The reading should have been done at the first rehearsal, maybe the second or third rehearsal, maybe even the fourth rehearsal. After that they shouldn't even be looking at the music. They should know the part, and they should be just listening and finding the inside of everything. Nobody's doing that.

I think there's a shortage of good instruction in the school systems in the rhythm section, and that goes for bass to. The drummers have been relegated to playing with electric bass players instead of upright bass players. They never learn to use their bass drum properly because of that. They never learn to control it because they have a tendency to use rock tuning. They can't leave their bass drums open and get a nice, big, deep ringing sound, which is very important to the sound of the band. The tendency is to play the bass drum hard, and have it stuffed with a dozen pillows. It sounds good with the rock arrangements, but for the straight 4/4—"One O'Clock Jump" or something of that ilk—it sounds terrible, because there's no fullness to the sound. There's no musical tone coming from the drums—the sound that complements the brass and the saxophones. And, of course, drummers are also missing that upright wooden bass that blends with the bass drum—a blend that they cannot get when their drums are tuned to rock tuning.

RM: It seems that most of the books and articles that I've seen directed towards big band drumming have focused on how to do little fills to set up figures. If they were going to start those 40 bands, and all 40 drummers were sitting in this room, what is the first thing you would tell them to be aware of in playing with a big band? Would you start them out by teaching them how to set up a figure?

ML: No, I'd start them out by showing them how to keep time, how to hold sections together, and how to control three different lead players who have different conceptions of where the time should be and get them to put the time where the drummer wants it. In other words, the drummer should be working along with the lead trumpet player to set a whole concept for the rest of the sections, so that they will all follow that lead trumpet, who is following the drummer. I would work on that first. They should just keep time, listen, and not worry about the fills and setups until they really know the music. If we had 40 drummers sitting here going into 40 different bands, they would all be going in to play 40 different books and stock fills won't work. I think drummers should create their own fills based on what they are hearing, instead of the old standard fill before a dotted quarter. Everybody plays "baa, daa, daa, daa, bop." I never play "baa, daa, daa, daa, bop." It works, but it's stock. It's something that everybody writes, everybody does, it's predetermined, and you don't really think about it. It is used 20 times in every arrangement, because that particular figure shows

up so much. But drummers can create their own fills based on the music itself—based on what will follow or what preceded.

Also, in many cases, at the point where they would put a drum fill, there is something musical going on underneath, which is a written fill for another section. So the drum fill should, perhaps, reinforce what's already written. I would tell them to forget everything they've learned from books and to forget everything they've heard someone else do, because what that drummer did only worked at that point, at that moment, for that particular thing. Drummers are going to have to start becoming more musicians, rather than fillers. Just because there are a few beats, or a beat, or an eighth of a beat, they don't have to play a fill there. Space is beautiful too—silence, or just a time figure.

So I'd work on the time first, and on learning to sew the unit together, so that the band can work as one. As a drummer, you have to build the band's confidence in you, so that you can try anything and it won't bother them. Don't get them in a habit of waiting for a specific thing that you're going to do so that they don't have to count. Be unpredictable, but make them have a lot of confidence in you, so that they won't worry about it, because they know that no matter what you play, it will be right.

RM: I've heard you talk about the importance of matching the colors of the drumset to the colors of the band. Could you be specific?

ML: Oh, sure. The average drummer usually uses two to four cymbals. To have any more than that is totally unnecessary, because where are you going to put them anyway, and how are you going to reach them? They shouldn't be there just for looks. I notice that most people have crash, crash, splash, ride, and hi-hat. Very few young drummers play on their hi-hats, except in the rock situation where they generally play them closed and they play their 8th-note beat on them. They should learn that the hi-hat is another ride cymbal to be played properly—"ta, da-ka, ta, da-ka, ta," changing rhythms and all that, open/closed, all open, half open, half closed. There are a lot of effects. To me, the hi-hat is another ride cymbal. Every cymbal I use is a ride cymbal. Every one of my cymbals is also a crash cymbal. I only use three. Three is enough.

I find that all the cymbals should be dark. If you want a high-pitched splash cymbal or crash cymbal, fine. That's to your own taste. But darker cymbals are more complementary to horns than any other kind of cymbal. High-pitched cymbals have a tendency to obliterate high sounds. So when you hit a high crash cymbal with the brass section while they're up in that high register, you will knock out half their sound. But if you hit a cymbal that will blend with that section—in other words, if there are four trumpets and the fourth is playing the lowest part, you should be the fifth trumpet, which is lower yet. Now of course, we can't go that low all the time, but that's the way I'm thinking musically. Trombones, of course, can go lower than my cymbals can, so I want to be somewhere in the middle register where I don't obliterate the lead and I don't destroy the bottom. With the saxophones, you want a roaring

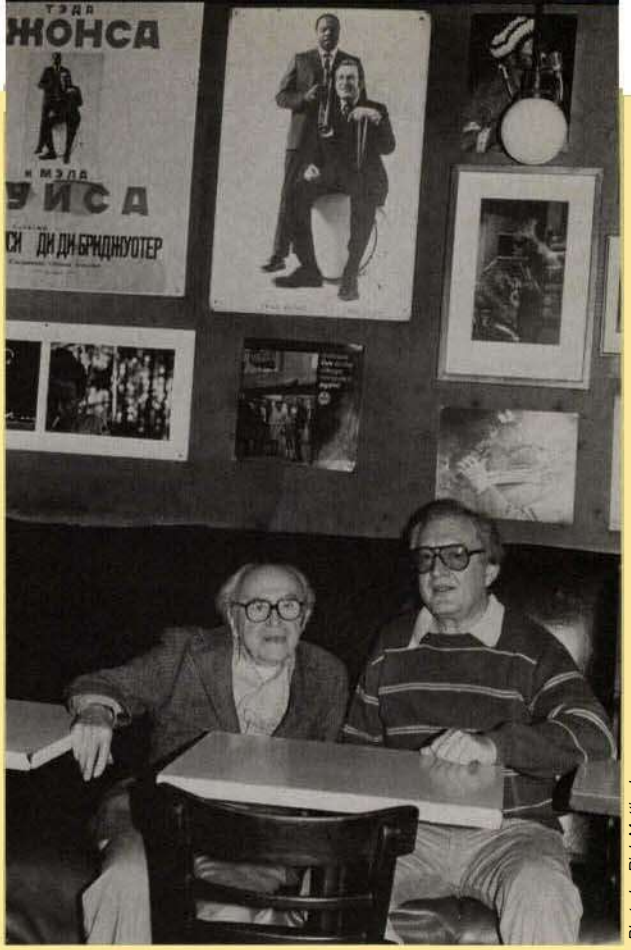

Photo by Rick Mattingly

Max Gordon and Mel at the Vanguard

Photo by Tom Copi

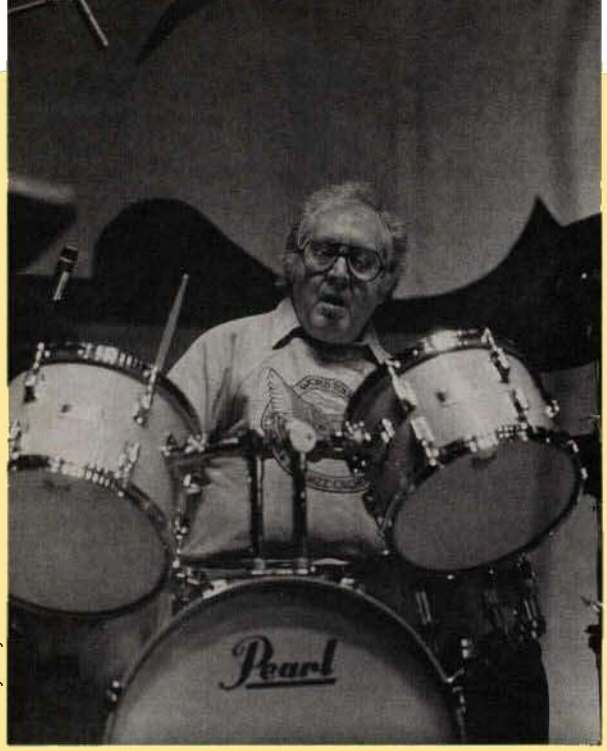

Photo by Veryl Oakland

sound to envelop, because reeds don't have the power that the brass has. That's why I believe that during a sax *soli*—where you have five saxophone players standing up playing together—nothing sounds better behind them than a Chinese ride cymbal, because there's a blend. Bass violin players love Chinese cymbals because the low sound and the Oriental type of roar make the bass sound spring forward. That's why, when we play big ensembles, I'll go to that cymbal, and you can hear the bass just singing through everything. When you've got a whole ensemble, you want a strong, enveloping, low sound with a lot of clarity as far as the beat is concerned. It's like a picture with a beautiful metal frame around it. It gives tremendous fullness to the sound of the band.

That's why I prefer the darker sounding cymbals and that is why I tell every drummer, "Every cymbal you have should be a ride cymbal, because you should treat the different sections with a different ride behind it." There is nothing worse than the monotony of one cymbal going on behind everything. When the band is playing along and they keep hearing the same cymbal sound, it just disappears in their minds. But when you make a change to another ride cymbal, it wakes them up again. Even in my dark sounds there is still a higher sound, a medium sound, and a lower sound. I'll use the high sound behind a piano. I'll also use the lowest sound behind a piano. But I won't use the middle sound behind the piano because it's too much in the piano's range. Behind the piano, a flute, or a muted trumpet, I'll also use the hi-hats or brushes. When I'm playing behind, say, a trumpet solo followed by a tenor solo, and I know that the tenor player is a hard-blower, I'll use the Chinese cymbal behind the tenor. Now, if it's just going to be a trumpet solo, or if the tenor player has a lighter sound, I'll use my normal 20" ride cymbal. But I'll always save my Chinese for the hardest blowing soloist. I don't work it out; it's just automatic—which cymbal suits which soloist. I want to have a low cymbal behind a soloist who has a harsh, high sound. With a subdued type of player who has a softer edge, I don't want something that strong, so I go to a lighter, higher sound to complement it. When the band is roaring, for main ensemble work, I would stick with my 20" ride or I would use my hi-hats and really lay into them, which was the norm in the old days anyway. If it's an ensemble that keeps building, then when I hit the final loudest point, I'll go to the Chinese. So I might play three cymbals in the course of an ensemble. If you have three choruses of ensemble—which is rare—the first chorus is not going to be that shouting. It's going to build to that. The second one is going to be stronger so you change cymbals. Then you go to the roarer for your last one.

Another thing I've found is that it's good to change cymbals on the bridge of tunes and then go back. A bridge is a musical change, so your cymbals should be a musical change also. If it's the first chorus, I'll play hi-hats for 16 bars, go to a light ride cymbal for the bridge, and then go back to the hi-hats to finish it out. Then I'll go to my chosen ride cymbal for the solo. But every cymbal should be a ride cymbal and every cymbal should be a crash cymbal. I've been noticing that almost everyone has only one ride cymbal and a million crash cymbals. You don't need the crash cymbals. You need the ride cymbals, because that's where your whole thing is coming from. Crash cymbals are only for accents, so you can hit any cymbal for a crash. Also, you should start with a crash and end with a crash. I see drummers ending with a crash cymbal, but then choking it. When you hit that big chord at the end, let it ring. Hit that bass drum and hit that cymbal—"POW" instead of "pop." That's exciting. There should be a finality to that final blow, unless it's a soft ending, of course. Then you don't even need a cymbal at the end, although I like to hit one softly. But that's always been a thing of mine: Start with a crash and end with a crash.

The more high-pitched cymbals you have, the more trouble you're going to give the band. Also, for riding in a big band, I think that the pingier a cymbal is and the less overtone and spread it has, the more empty everything will be. It's important that you have a good, full, fat-sounding cymbal. Finding cymbals like that today seems to be a problem. They are all too heavy. Definition is one thing, but those pings do not cut through. There has to be a little more sound to a cymbal than they're creating right now. They've forgotten how to make ride cymbals with color. They don't know what dark sound is. That's why I still like the old K.'s. They're hard to find, but it seems like they are the only cymbal that was made for music. The old A's were too—the *old* ones. But today, they're thinking in terms of loudness and durability rather than musicality. I know what I'm talking about because I hear the complaints from everybody. I see it in your magazine here. Everybody's complaining about the cymbals—that they're all too heavy. Even the famous rock players are complaining that they can't find enough colors in their cymbals, but that they would really like to find some. And everybody wants to have an old K. There's a reason for that.

I've been playing original K. Zildjian cymbals practically all my life. The early hand-me-downs from my father were all K.'s, because that's what he used. Then I bought my first A., which I still have to this day. That's the famous one with the pieces cut out. Buddy Rich says it's probably the greatest ride cymbal of all time. I feel the same way about it. Everybody seems to know that cymbal. Of course, it's reached a point in its life where I can only use it occasionally, so I just use it for small-group recordings now, because it's starting to crack again, but it still has its flavor. That

Photo by Rick Mattingly

Photo by Rick Mattingly

would have been considered a bad A. in its time and it would be considered a horrible A. today because it was low pitch and a real medium weight, but that came from my K. ears. Later on, when I came to New York, I used A.'s for a while. All my A.'s were really considered by most people as not very good. They were all low pitched, but they had definition. Bandleaders I worked for were always complaining about them—that they spread too much and so on—but that was what I liked. You either took me as I was or that was that. When I joined the Kenton band, I needed to use A.'s because they are louder and I needed the volume. So I stayed with the A.'s there for a while. One of my ride cymbals was that famous one, with two rivets in it, which is my trademark. To this day, I've been using two rivets in my ride cymbal. Of course, as soon as I left the Kenton band I switched to K.'s completely. That was the end of '56. With my small-group playing, actually, I was using K.'s all along, but I became a permanent K. player from '56 on.

Now, they've become collector's items. I have a fine collection, although some of my best ones have been stolen. Things like that happen, but I still have some great K.'s. I thought, "Well, I hope these are going to last me for the rest of my life." I'm very happy to find out now that this new Istanbul Cymbal Company are the makers of the old cymbal. I found them up at Barry Greenspon's Drummers World. I tried some of them and said, "My God, they're back. These are the cymbals." I'm now using them and endorsing them. So I think my problems are over for the rest of my life. I now have access to what I've always lived with.

RM: A lot of people assume that big band means big drums. Your drums aren't all that big.

ML: No, big band does not mean big drums, and big band does not mean loud drums. Big band means full-sounding drums. That's achieved just by smart tuning and having a good drum. I played Gretsch for 35 years and I tried a lot of the other brands. When I was a kid, I started out with an old set of Leedy. They had a wonderful sound. The shells were thin, and in those days, Leedy used the reinforcing ring. When I went to Gretsch, Phil Grant proved to me what a beautiful musical instrument a Gretsch drum was.

"AN ENGINEER WILL DO SIX SESSIONS IN ONE DAY, WITH SIX DIFFERENT DRUMMERS, AND THEY'LL ALL END UP SOUNDING THE SAME."

Of course, I came up in the old school and heard all these marvelous drummers like Jo Jones and Krupa, and everybody had a big sound. They also had big drums, and so did I. I used to have a 26" bass drum with Boyd Raeburn and Alvino Rey. From '49 on I went to the 22", which I used through 1957. It had calf heads on both sides. In the Kenton band, I used a timpani head on the batter side, and as little muffling as possible. I found that you should use the biggest hard felt beater that you can on your bass drum. In those days, they made large beaters. I guess that came out of the old lambswool tradition where the beaters were large, and you couldn't wait until you wore that thing down to where you had a piece of leather with enough fur around the outside to act as a muffler. You got a beautiful sound with a beater like that. Then hard felt beaters became more popular, but they also were making them large. You want that beater to hit as much in the direct center of the drum as possible to get the clean sound for big band playing. Of course, with a 26" bass drum, there's no way you're going to hit in the center of the drum. But still everybody got great sounds out of their drums. That sound was embedded in my head, my ears, my mind,

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MARK BRZEZICKI

by Stanley Hall

A lot has been written about Big Country's guitar sound, almost to the exclusion of everything else about them. While it's undeniable that the band's guitar sounds have captured a lot ofpeople's attention, their drummer is not exactly out to lunch. Behind that much touted bagpipe sound is some thunderously massive drumming, a whirlwind of crashing cymbals, throbbing tom-toms and rolling snare drums, all combined to propel Big Country out of the studio and over the airwaves.

Drummer Mark Brzezicki once remarked, "Do you want to know the secret of our guitar sound? I'll tell you. It's in my drumkit. "And in a way, he's right because his aggressive, Afro-army-esque rolls perfectly highlight and complement what he calls the "stirring "sound of the band. Never was a band better named, because their sound really is big—big to the point ofMark's drums sounding like a bulldozer plowing through your stereo speakers. And then he turns around and picks up a pair of brushes!

Though he defies categorization, one thing that can be said of big Mark Brzezicki (over 6' tall) ofBig Country is that he's a man who loves what he's doing. He loves drums and drumming—eats, sleeps, lives and breathes drumming and is not ashamed to admit it. It's doubtful that an hour a day goes by when Mark is not either playing or thinking about drums. His invigorating combination of seasoned professionalism and pure enthusiasm comes out both in his playing and his daily life. And he can't wait to tell you about it.

SH: What was your background before you joined Big Country?

MB: Tony Butler and I go back for about the last six years. When we left our previous group, we decided to stick together as a rhythm section, even though we didn't have a band. During that time, we called ourselves Rhythm For Hire. We got a manager who put us out together as a rhythm section, rather than the odd drumming job here and the odd bass job there. This way we could still be considered as a unit, since we felt that we worked well together. Before that, all the rest of my career goes back to playing in the pubs and clubs around London, doing dinner dances, which taught me lots of styles of music.

SH: Did you have lessons then? I noticed that you play mostly traditional grip, which is unusual for someone in your genre, in a band like Big Country.

MB: I'm self-taught via a very old drum book that I have, which is the Royal Air Force School of Drumming book. It showed such things as the correct way to hold the stick, the mommy-daddy roll—two on the right, two on the left—and the paradiddle. I practiced as much technique as I could physically conjur out of the book. I found that, forme, the traditional way of playing, where it comes through the wrist rather than the arm, was best. But for rock music, I find that when there's generally a main thrash or a constant repetitive beat that relies on a steady backbeat kind of thing, I play matched grip with the butt end of the left stick just for sheer power. That's when there's no need for double hits or anything.

SH: On the Big Country album, there's a lot of what might be loosely termed a martial approach to things—a lot of long rolls and double-stroke rolls.

MB: Again, I base my drumming around mommy-daddies quite often, and I like the feel I get from just moving my hands around while doing the same thing. I get a lot of interesting things. Big Country's music is quite stirring, and although everyone denies this bagpipe sound, I can often hear those bagpipes. It's almost like I'm blending in rock drumming with a marching pipe band feel.

I always liked the way Steve Gadd would play rolls. I find that gentle tapping on the snare drum more inspirational than some heavy beat. Like if you hear "Fifty Ways To Leave Your Lover"—I love that sort of feel to the music. And 1 found Big Country was a great way to play rock 'n' roll with some of that involved, just by sticking to the way I like to play drums rather than trying to play the way I'm told to. I always try to play the way I feel a song should be played.

SH: What is your input then when songs are coming up or being written?

MB: Our songs come from jamming on stage or from a song that someone has written that we only like part of. Recently, we recorded some demos in Scotland and everyone went down to the pub. I said, "I'm not going down to the pub. I've got studio time here. I'm going to record some drum tracks." I always find that I'm full of rhythms, and often if only they would play with me, we could have a different rhythm other than "bush, bang, bush, bang" all the time.

So we were asked to write the theme music to a film called *Streets Of Fire,* which is an American Hollywood production thing, and we'd been asked to write a track for *Against All Odds,* a film for which we released one of our very early recordings called "Balcony." I'm not very pleased with it. I didn't like the production of it. But I thought film music can often be very different—very experimental. So I laid this big drum track down and I invented an intro, verse, chorus, middle eight, verse, chorus, verse, chorus and outro. They came back from the pub, heard it and played on top of me. So we write different ways and that's turned out quite amazing, especially for drummers to listen to. There are lots of things happening. There are three rhythms all on top of each other.

SH: I noticed, too, that you play a lot. There are some bands out now who are very good, but the drumming in those bands seems to be on the dull side. In contrast, you do a lot of playing on your tunes.

MB: I find that drummers are going through a very bad patch at the moment. There's a lot of technology like the *LinnDrum* machine and the Fairlight or whatever. Basically, the person in the street doesn't know whether it's a drummer anymore or whether it's a machine. I think that's a sad state of affairs, because the drums are more than just something to tap your foot to. They always come from the heart. So the playing should be as inspirational and as unpredictable as the human body is.

Also, the sounds that everyone uses via the silicon chip are the same. I mean, to me, a *LinnDrum* machine doesn't even sound like a drum. And in a way, it has become a fashion to use a certain sound. I go into the studio and my drums do *not* sound like the *LinnDrum* machine. There's no way. Because of this, people are getting the wrong perspective of where the main foundation of music lies. It goes from the drums to the bass to the music. I try to be more creative than just sitting back and playing "boom whack, boom whack" on a slack snare drum; they might just as well have a *LinnDrum* machine if that's all they're going to do.

People say, "That was a big hit. We have to have 'boom whack, boom whack' on ours, too." That's not true at all. Music doesn't stand still. I throw that out the window and do something totally wrong—play *Octobans* instead of snare drum. I'm into letting the drummer be noticed again, because I always feel that the drummer will never go out of season. I think we're one of the few bands that still keeps the drummer in fashion.

When I hear a real drumkit being played, I feel *really, really* excited. I can't help it. That's the reason I play drums. My heart beats faster. If I look at the drumkit, it looks *really* exciting. All the steel, the drums, the shiny shells, the cymbals—it takes my breath away. When you see somebody play it well and sound good and it comes from a human being, it's something incredible. Groups that

Photo by Fumiaki Yamada / Photo Courtesy of Pearl Drum Company

have tape recorders are fooling somebody somewhere along the line: You might as well replace them with a tape, too.

The backbone of any group is the bass and drums. That's why Tony and 1 have a good rapport. We've always stuck together and that's the foundation of a good group. It's the drummers, I find, who come first, because the music comes from the heart. A marching drum says "boom, boom, boom" and your heart beats faster. Even the sound of a bass drum is derived from that. It hits you in the chest and it comes from the heart. I don't think that can be taken away from something synthetic.

When I hear a rhythm box playing on the radio, it just goes in one ear and out the other. Rhythm boxes are okay to help people in situations where a drumkit is impractical, like using it in a demo situation to help write songs where it is impossible to set up the drumkit. Then it should be used to help, not to hinder, the drummer. Another thing to remember is that the rhythm box is only as good as the person who programs it anyway. So you find that, because people do without drummers and there's not a drummer around to program it, you get what I call these "immature" rhythms. They are idiot-type rhythms, you know? They are unnatural and they have no feeling. That's throwing the book of drumming out the window, as far as I'm concerned.

SH: What about the Phil Collins approach of using both of them in conjunction—using a *Rhythm Ace* to set up patterns?

MB: I think if you're after a sound that is accessible to today's ears—to the people in the street who don't really understand music—it can be good to mix. Sometimes it's good to have a robotic feel with all this computer dancing, so you may need a rhythm box. It may be good for the intro, but it's great to hear the drummer come in and sit with it, which is what Phil Collins does.

SH: Have you ever considered doing anything like that?

MB: Well, when I record, I always use a click track because I've done session work for a long time. I've found that using a click was the easiest way to get the job done quicker, and I'm good at keeping time to a rhythm box. Often, depending on the studio, I'll either use a click metronome, or if there's a *LinnDrum* machine, I will program "boom whack, boom whack."

Sometimes on our records, Steve Lillywhite will bring out the backing track that I'm listening to, as in "In A Big Country." In the 12-inch version there's a "whack, whack, whack" which is actually the click that I was hearing. I find that quite nice, because you hear the click's time and you hear me slightly shifting against it. I like things to shift slightly. It makes it more human.

SH: One of Steve Lillywhite's production trademarks is a huge drum sound—the kind of sound he gets on records with Joan Armatrading, Peter Gabriel and others, as well as Big Country.

MB: Steve Lillywhite is one of the most interesting producers for a drummer I've ever come across. If he wasn't a producer, Steve Lillywhite would be a drummer. He can't play a single beat on the drumkit, but in his mind he understands. He's got a good ear for things a drummer would be excited about. He always listens to the drums for ideas, and often picks up on little mistakes and turns them into something interesting. I could be playing a song for the first time, and I might get lost, do a double snare and find I'm the wrong way round. He'll say, "That's it! Let's come in on that!" He's really in on the drums for experimenting. There are no rules for recording a drumkit.

When I record with Steve, we use microphones everywhere. We have them in the bathroom; we have them down the hall. I have about four ambient mic's in the room—one above the snare, two behind, about eight feet up. I have a mic' underneath the snare, a mic' on top, a mic' in the drums as on stage, on every drum, and often we use a lot of outside sounds. But we normally use the outside sounds on a separate track. He gets them to be an ambient sound so he can feed it in and out. He likes to change the feeling and ambience. And he never keeps a drum track sounding the same all the way through the song. He's constantly slightly dubbing, bringing in the ambience, and taking out the ambience. But he's definitely into having the drums be a huge wallop, as it were. Somebody once said that he records drums as if they were at the bottom of a drain. I like his approach to drums. He's one of the most exciting producers I know to bring out drummers.

SH: You mentioned before that he has the mic's set up essentially the same way that you have your kit set up on stage.

MB: It's basically the same as I've got it on stage, with the ambient mic's added and put on a separate track.

SH: And this is the kit that you record with, too? The same one you tour with?

MB: Yes, my Pearl kit out there is exactly what I used to record *The Crossing.* When I was a rhythm section with Tony, I played on two

Photo by Jerry Lombardo

of Pete Townsend's solo albums and I used my other Pearl kit, which is the same as this one except in black and double-headed, which didn't seem to cut as much. Working with guitarists, 1 find that, because of the sheer "kerrang" and the staccatoness, it's better to leave my bottom heads off of the toms. I think perhaps I would have been better off using this drumkit on the Townsend albums. I recorded a couple of tracks on *Empty Glass* and 1 did seven songs on *Chinese Eyes.*

Before we came to Japan, we did the second leg of our American tour, and just before that, I went into the studio and recorded Frida's new album. She's the one from Abba. Before that, 1 did Roger Daltry's solo album last year.

SH: Are you still doing session work in between tours?

MB: When I can, yes, but only when the band stops, which is the reason why I haven't done too much session work. The only time I had was two weeks between tours. I did Frida's album, came straight from her album to America, and straight from America to Japan. During any time off, I play because 1 don't like a day to go by where I don't pick up my drumsticks. And I'd rather have the challenge of playing someone else's music. I enjoy the variety of not being stylized as Big Country's drummer all the time, you know. Obviously, it's connections and connections, and I think I've started to get a good name. I hope so anyway! And they're asking me to do different things. I've been recommended to work on Stevie Nicks' new solo album, and I've been asked to play on Bob Seger's solo record which will be very, very different for me. But I never say no; I like the challenge.

SH: When you did the Frida album, did you work from demo tapes or did you use charts?

MB: I don't read at all. At one point, I did master it very simply, but since I've never been asked to do it, I've found that I've never had to do it. I have my own way of writing it down, like idiot language that I understand, either with a little drawing, diagrams, or my own association of thoughts. I write cues down. I normally can learn songs very quickly like that.

I basically rely on my ear and I find that people actually like that. They start playing the song and I just have to join in. It's very spontaneous. I think my best ideas come like that. When I think too hard, I'm not very good. I think anyone who tries to think too hard about something fouls up. I can't listen to my drumming when I play. If I start to listen, I stop. If you are walking and you begin to look at where your feet are going, you start to walk funny. It's best just to do it, you know.

SH: You're playing on Pearl drums. Could you describe your double-duty touring/recording kit?

MB: My touring kit is a maple wood Pearl kit. All the stands and fittings are also Pearl. The bass drum is 14 x 22.I use 8 x 8, 8 x 10, 10 x 12, 11 x 13 toms and two hanging floor toms—12 x 14 and a 14x15 which is an unusual size. I find it hard to get heads sometimes.

SH: Is there any particular reason why you use that size?

MB: I don't like drums to be too big. In fact, I'd like to experiment with an 18" bass drum. I don't really like a boomy sound. I think a boomy sound can come naturally via the hall and ambient mic's that we use. So I like the initial thump to be a good, clean, tight hit, and then you can expand on that. When you haven't really got a good, solid thump and then you add ambience, you've got no substance. So I think for my height and for everything to be in perspective, there's obviously a logical sequence. There's an optimum size for the notes you use, too; you can't use a huge drum and tune it

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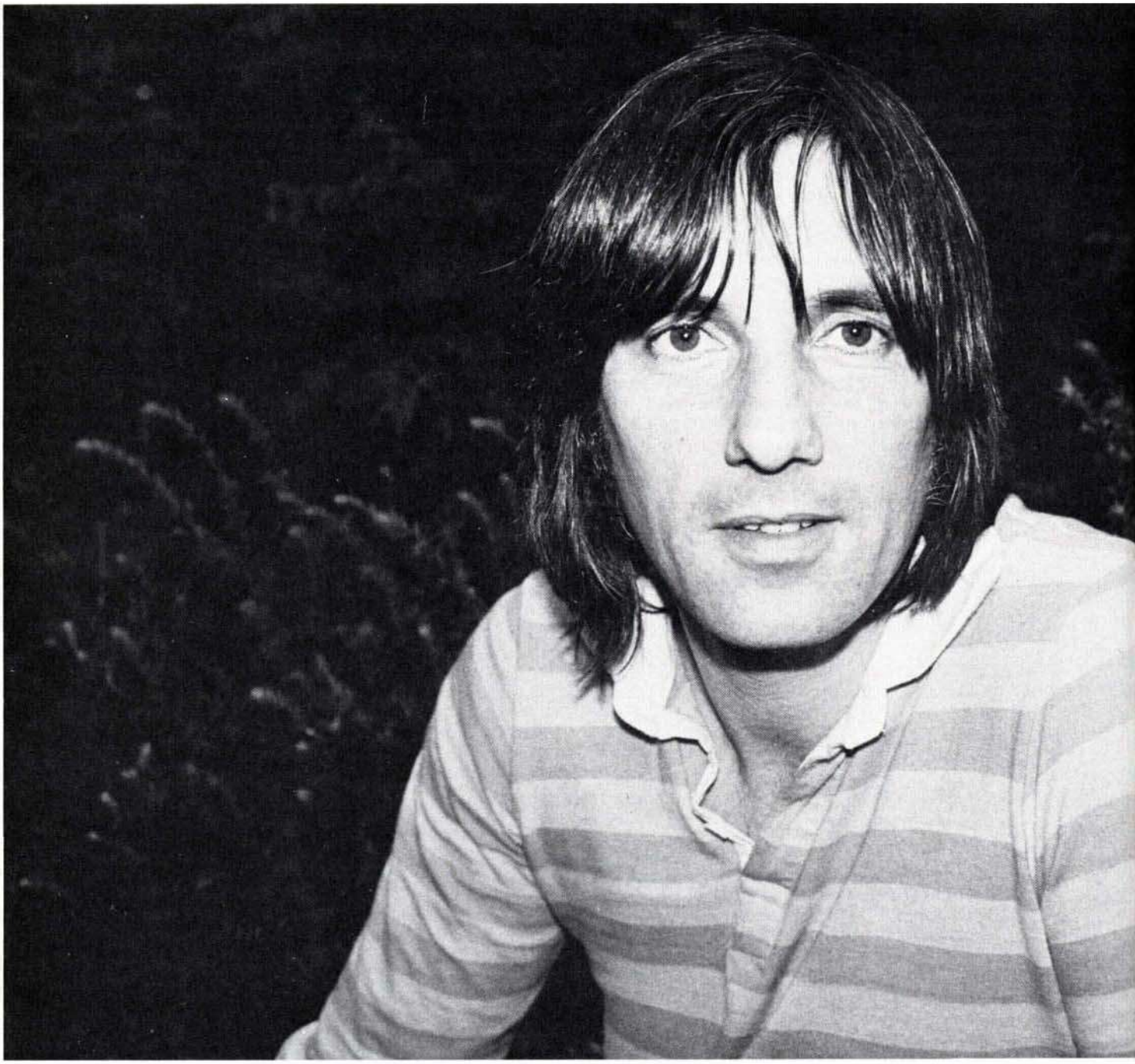
Photo by Ron Wolfson / LGL

MICK AV



KNOWING THE JOB

THE Kinks' Konk Recording Studio sits on the edge of London in an area hardly recognizable to a city visitor. Located a good 40 minutes from Picadilly Circus by public transportation (i.e., underground and bus), the studio is on an inconspicuous side street up a slight hill from the bus stop, past a cluster of repair shops, and beyond a few small factories thick with blue-collar bustle.

At first, I think that perhaps I got off at the wrong stop. But as I turn the bend, I'm at once relieved to know I'm at the right place after all. I know because of the graffiti that graces the wall of the building in front of me. In runny, spray-painted letters are the words State Of Confusion; to the left of them is written Give The People What They Want. These, of course, are the titles of two of the more recent and more popular Kinks albums. And this studio, Konk, is where they were created. The sight is enough to make any Kinks fan feel warm all over.

I'm supposed to meet drummer Mick Avory here at noon. It's currently ten minutes past the hour. Despite my tardiness, previous experience tells me I'm probably early. Wrong. Avory, who has also arrived by public transit, is in the recording studio's waiting room, thumbing through a magazine and sipping a steaming cup of tea. I'm told by the secretary that he's been

O R Y

Photo by Ebet Roberts

by Robert Santelli

there since 11:30.

I introduce myself and apologize for being late. "Oh, it's no problem really," says Avory in a soft, friendly voice. "It gave me a chance to settle down and relax before our little chat. So it's drumming you want to talk about, is it?"

Indeed. Mick Avory has been playing the drums for something like 25 years now. Since 1962, he's been playing them for the Kinks. Precious few rock bands are still around from those pre-British Invasion days. Somehow though, the Kinks, unlike so many other rock bands from the '60s, have managed to endure. The Kinks and Mick Avory, you might say, are survivors.

A quiet, sort of unassuming man, Avory is not what you 'd expect him to be. He certainly doesn't reflect the aggressive, heavy hitter we first met in the opening salvos of that timeless rocker, "You Really Got Me" way back in 1964. Rather, Avory is soft-spoken, seemingly mild-mannered and very modest when away from his drumkit. There's also a feeling of content that punctuates his words and facial expressions as we talk. It's a sense, I think, of knowing where he's been and what he's accomplished.

Unlike so many other drummers today, Avory is not a vocalist, a songwriter, or a technician extraordinaire in the studio. He has no pressing ambition to record a solo album and see it climb up the charts. He's a band player, in the purest sense of the term, a drummer who long ago defined his role in the Kinks and worked to perfect it.

Avory is a traditionalist. As he freely admits, his drum style is just about what it was when the Kinks first began—although much more polished and refined due to all those hours he's logged behind his kit. His style is simple, sharp, and perhaps most importantly, sensitive to the needs of composer and bandleader Ray Davies' songs.

"I like to do my job, "says Avory with a growing smile. "But I think one first has to know what that job is. If anything, that's been a key to any success I've had as a drummer."

RS: Even though the Kinks have been together for well over 20 years, the group never quite matched the huge commercial success of say, the Rolling Stones, the other British heavy-weight group formed back in 1962. It's no secret that a large chunk of the Kinks's success in the States materialized only in the last five years or so.

MA: Yes, that's true. We had a period in the late '60s and '70s in which nothing really happened for us. But then towards the end of the '70s and into the '80s we got back to the roots of the group. We went back to basic rock 'n' roll—no brass or anything like that—just the boys in the band. I think that's what you might say is responsible for our success in the last few years.

RS: But why weren't the Kinks able to capitalize on such classic rockers as "You Really Got Me" and "All Day And All Of The Night" during the first British Invasion?

MA: The concept albums we recorded had a lot to do with it, I suppose. Also, we'd been banned from playing in America for four years. That didn't help the group's ability to sell records, either.

RS: If I remember correctly, wasn't the problem a union-related one?

MA: Yeah, it was. We had a dispute with the union [American Federation of Musicians]. We did something we shouldn't have and they banned us from playing in the States for three years, 1965 to 1968, although it was actually four before we went back.

RS: What was it exactly that you did?

MA: Well, it had something to do with TV work we weren't supposed to do because of a union strike. But we went ahead and did it anyway. At the time, we didn't realize the severity of the situation.

RS: There are only a couple of bands, the Rolling Stones included, that can boast the longevity of the Kinks. What is it that has kept the band together for so long?

MA: One thing has been Ray's [Davies] prolific writing. Whatever we go into, it's always a progression in one direction or another. Even when we did the concept albums—*The Village Green Preservation Society,* and *Arthur*—this was true. They didn't attract much wide-spread commercial appeal, but we had a large cult following because of them. The people who had always been interested in the Kinks became sort of 110% interested in us. Those records, and the other concept albums we did, were fun to do even if they weren't really successful from a sales standpoint.

Another thing that's kept the Kinks together is the fact that Ray and Dave are brothers and have kicked around together since school days. So the group has been something like a family business. They've been inclined to stick together, I think, because of their family ties. The bond between them is strong in that respect. This, plus the fact that we have our own studio, Konk, allows us to pace ourselves and has really kept the group intact more than anything else, I think.

RS: Was there ever a time when you or other members of the Kinks temporarily lost the interest to go on as the Kinks? Did the group ever come close to folding?

MA: Yeah, there were a few times when the interest dwindled, but then something would happen that would pick us up again. It's always been like that.

RS: And throughout the high points and the lows, you've been the group's one and only drummer.

MA: That's right, yes.

RS: Have you ever given a thought or two to playing with another band, or playing a different kind of music?

MA: A couple of times, yeah. Maybe if I could play drums like Billy Cobham, I might have found myself more creatively frustrated than I actually ever was. On

occasion, I've played little gigs with musicians other than the Kinks or sat in with friends, and it's been a lot of fun. But it's always been enough for me, really.

RS: The Kinks have recorded somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 albums in the past 20 years. Looking back, what are the albums that mean the most to you? Which ones do you feel best about in terms of your playing?

MA: I think the first record I really felt good about was *Arthur*. That was one of the best produced records we did early on, and it had all kinds of interesting tempos and switches and things to play. *Schoolboys In Disgrace* is another memorable one in that category. I also had a good time with *Sleepwalker*. On that record, we got a really heavy, solid sound and it worked extremely well.

RS: Recording all those albums means that you've accumulated a lot of time in the studio. What's been your approach to recording? Has it changed over the years?

MA: My approach goes in different phases, actually. Usually we know what we want to do before we go into the studio. But often Ray will come up with something and turn a whole song around right then and there. As for me, fortunately, I've had a lot of experience playing with him, so it's not too difficult to lock into what he wants to do. I strive to get the basic feel and the rhythm right. Once I establish that, then I can learn the rest of the number. We never do all of our arranging before we go in the studio. There may be a collection of ideas concerning the arrangements, but that might be all. Ray usually makes a tape of his ideas, and we listen to that first.

RS: Do you contribute directly to the arrangements of Kinks songs?

MA: Not necessarily, no. The writing of the songs is basically Ray's department. In the end, he's got to have what he feels is right. Often, however, I'll throw out drum ideas. Sometimes they fit, and sometimes they don't. When they do fit, I feel quite good about them, actually. But everybody seems to write with drum machines these days, don't they? So that means the songwriters usually have a pretty good idea of what they want to hear from the drummers without any of their input. The nice thing about that is it makes my job easier. I don't have to search out the proper rhythm all the time.

RS: Ray Davies is such a multi-talented songwriter. His composing range is one of the wildest in all of rock. Has that ever posed a problem for you? Throughout the years, there seems to have been very few musical ideas he's used twice.

MA: Ray has always let me try whatever I wanted to. But if it doesn't work out, he'll simply get rid of it.

RS: Your reputation as a drummer is pretty much as a straight-forward, economical hitter who does what he has to do to get the job done. You're rarely excessive in any area of your playing. Would you agree with that?

MA: Yes, because the kinds of songs that Ray writes rarely call for me to be a fussy drummer. If I'm too fussy, the rhythm gets awfully cloudy, if you know what I mean. The drums, especially drum fills, should never get in the way of the vocals.

RS: The Kinks have transcended numerous phases and trends in rock. As a drummer, do you actively seek to keep up with all that's new in rock drumming?

MA: It's funny because the things that I

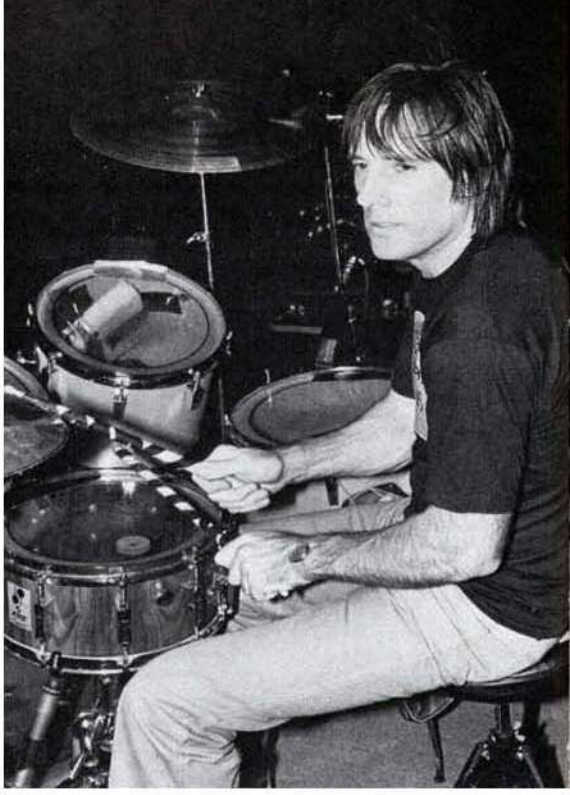


Photo by Ebet Roberts

Photo by Ebet Roberts

was doing when we first recorded songs like "You Really Got Me" are more what I'm in tune with these days than anything else. Groups now are largely influenced by that era and those types of songs, so all of a sudden, that drum sound is very fashionable, isn't it. There haven't been all that many great advancements without going into jazz rock or-some other related field. What we've done is come full circle.

RS: Are you saying that your drum style has remained pretty much the same since the early and mid-'60s?

MA: I think it's probably gotten even simpler, if anything, as far as notation goes. Since the band has gone back to its roots, there's really no need for complicated rhythms. Complicated rhythms are nice to be able to do, but I don't get to use them all that much, except in very special cases. I'll use them when a part of a song needs a lift of some sort. Otherwise, 1 just stick with a basic, solid beat and fill in around the vocal.

RS: During the first British Invasion of the '60s, you were considered one of the hardest hitters in all of rock 'n' roll.

MA: Yeah, because I played quite loud for the times. But there were a few other drummers around who could play just as loud. I never used to try to play loud deliberately; actually, it used to be the other way around. But I had to play loud, because if I didn't, no one would have been able to hear me. I really enjoyed playing in small clubs back then, because I could play a little softer. The thought of playing a stadium or a huge venue horrified me, to be quite frank.

RS: How did you finally overcome that?

MA: Well, it got better because of the improvement in sound systems and monitors. These enabled me to hear myself and everyone else in the band. When I first joined the group, I couldn't hear anyone when we played. The drums sounded loud to me, but I don't think they were that loud to the people standing in front of the group.

RS: Who did you follow in situations like that?

MA: Pete Quaife, the bass player. He was the key player for me. I used to speak to other drummers about this problem. They'd always tell me there was no solution to it. It was something you had to get used to.

RS: What were you doing before you joined the Kinks?

MA: I studied with a jazz drummer for a year when I was 16 years old. But they all try to teach you to become part of themselves, don't they. I never played jazz, but I learned techniques and the orthodox grip, which isn't really recommended in rock 'n' roll circles.

RS: Do you use the traditional grip today?

MA: No, I think I've lost it a bit. It's something you have to practice and stay in touch with. I'll use it sometimes when I don't have to play loud, or if I sit in with a traditional jazz band. Traditional grip has a bit more of a sensitive feel to it. But if I don't practice it, it feels like wet fish to me.

RS: Did you play with any bands before the Kinks?

MA: Yeah, I played with various local bands. We'd do a lot of Eddie Cochran. But I never really listened to records and got the arrangements down like other drummers. Nor did I understand what was being played on the records. I came up through the skiffle days, which were related to traditional jazz and folk music. I used to listen to Lonnie Donnegan, Johnny Duncan and all those people. The drummers from that era who I listened to the most helped me get an idea of what drumming was all about. I used to do a lot of brush work back then.

RS: Is it true that, for a brief time, you were a member of the Rolling Stones?

MA: I wasn't exactly a member as such, but around '62 I used to play with a fellow who played a squeezebox, or accordion, plus vibes and piano. He was young—only about 13 or 14—a child prodigy. His father was a drummer, who used to advertise in *Melody Maker,* I think it was. Well, one week Mick Jagger contacted him and said, "We need a drummer for a gig at the Marquee." The boy's father refused the job, called me up, and said the gig was more in my line. So I phoned Mick, who was an unknown at the time, went to the rehearsal to see what it was all about, and played some. After rehearsal, Mick told me he and the band were looking for a permanent drummer. I told him I'd do the gig with the band, but that 1 wasn't really looking for permanent work.

RS: Why was that?

MA: Well, at the time, I hadn't made up my mind as to whether or not I wanted to be a professional drummer. People, you know, were advising me against it. But to finish the story, I did another rehearsal with the Stones, although we never did do the gig. That was the last I saw of Mick until I went on the road with the Kinks. But whether or not I would have fit in with the band was something else. I never really got that far to find out.

RS: Did you know Charlie Watts at the time?

MA: No, because I came from southwest London, and he and Mick and the others were London boys, which meant we were quite a ways apart. I remember the group used to play at the Crawdaddy Club before Charlie joined the band.

RS: Were there any drummers who had a profound influence on the development of your drum style back then?

MA: I think Bobby Elliott of the Hollies

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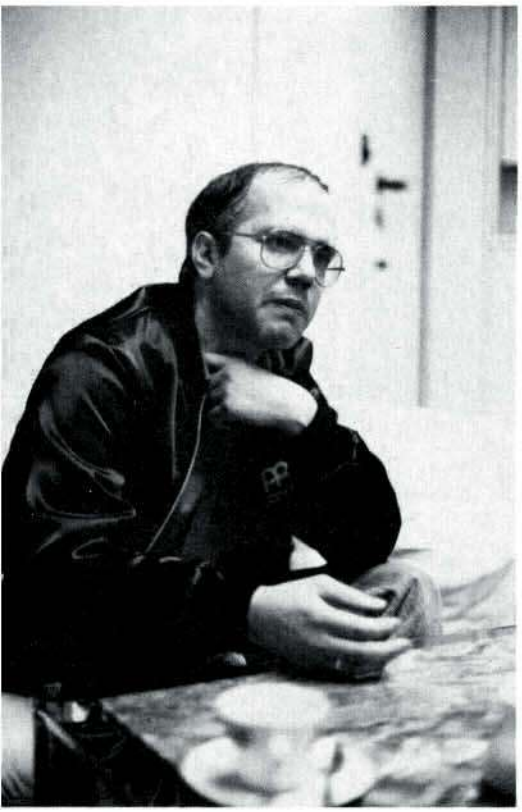
Photo by Ebet Roberts

Roland Meinl, founder and president of Meinl Musical Instruments.



Reinhold Meinl, son of Roland and spokesman for the Meinl company.

WHEN one thinks of German manufacturing, one inevitably thinks of high technology, efficient, organized production, and a precision-made product—whatever that product may be. So it will come as no surprise that the Meinl cymbal operation in Germany possesses all those qualities. What may be more of a surprise is that the company is a family owned and operated concern that began as a cottage industry, but is now a major member of the European musical instrument manufacturing and distributing community.

The name Meinl may not be familiar to most American drummers, because up until now the company's products have been marketed either outside the U.S., or in the U.S. only under different brand names and franchise distribution systems. But now, Meinl is entering the U.S.—and world—professional cymbal market full steam ahead, with a new cymbal line called Profile, *a full-time exclusive American distributor, and the intention of becoming a viable—and successful—alternative to the existing pro-quality cymbal brands currently dominating the market.*

Located in Neustadt an der Aisch (a small town nestled amid quaint fields and vineyards in a region of Bavaria known primarily for 13th-century walled villages and dry white German wine), the Meinl cymbal factory represents something of an anachronism. Here is high technology at work, computer-programmed and automated, in the middle of dairy pastures and rural townships that haven't changed very much in 500 years.

Yet in one regard, the Meinl company maintains its ties to the community. The Meinl family is quick to point out that, although theirs is a very modern, mechanized system of manufacture, the factory is small, and people are still a crucial element in their success.

Although the focus of this story is on Meinl's cymbal-making operation, other activities of the company are interrelated in an important manner. Cross-technology is a contributing factor to design and quality control in each of Meinl's products, and lessons learned in the manufacturing of one item are quickly and smoothly incorporated into the production of others.

Reinhold Meinl, son of company founder and president Roland Meinl, acted as spokesman and guide for our tour of the Meinl operation. Other individuals who contributed important information and assistance included cymbal designer Wolfgang Wunder, who also serves as the company's liaison to drummers in the field, International Marketing Director Heinz Fina, Advertising Director Rob Terstall, Computer Programmer Johannes Mehl, and International Sales Representative Gerry Evans.

DQ: Can you give me some background on how the company began?

RM: My father established his company in 1951, one year before I was born. He started out making wind instruments. He was very young; he was 22 years of age when he started his business. He wasn't successful at making wind instruments, so he stopped that and started again, this time making cymbals by hand. He was married, I was there, and my brother was on the way, so it was very hard. He started from zero; there was just him. He bought the metal in big sheets, cut out the round shapes by hand, drilled the hole in the middle with a hand drill, and then finished the cymbal by hand, with the help of my mother. He worked from four o'clock in the morning until ten at night.

In '59, he was able to build a small, two-family house. In the top was our home, and in the basement there was a whole factory. Up to '64 he was alone, with my mother, my brother, sister and I. Our job was just to pack the cymbals in the poly bags. By the way, we were the first company to put cymbals in poly bags, over 20 years ago.

DQ: If your father started out on wind instruments, why did he turn to cymbals? Did he have any experience in their manufacture?

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RM: His grandfather had sometimes made cymbals by hand, so there was some family tradition, although there had never been any kind of factory operation. My father simply felt that he could make cymbals.

DQ: So your father made them by hand out of sheet metal?

RM: All by hand. And here's another thing: He got his first car in '59 or '60. Up until then, he had to bring the cartons of cymbals to the railway station on a bicycle!

In 1964 we got our first worker, who is still with us! It was the first time in nine years that my father had someone to help him who had to be paid.

DQ: How did the company get from a basement operation to the original Meinl factory?

RM: Well, first my father got the worker I mentioned. Then, one year later, my uncle joined the company. Any cymbals they made, they sold immediately; they never worked on building a "stock." This went on for several years. We were selling to some wholesalers in Germany, but most of the cymbals went to the U.S. But then, something happened which was a turning point. My father had displayed his cymbals at the Frankfurt [International Music] Fair for several years. In the middle of the '60s he was also displaying German-made

drums, exporting them together with our cymbals. But in '64 or so some people came to him and said, "You know, there are some drums being made in Japan now, and you just can't compete with your German-made drums, because they're too expensive. You should buy in Japan." My father made contact with two companies: Pearl and Tama, which was Star at that time. For two or three years he was selling two brands of drums in Germany, and I think he was the first to import Japanese drums here. Then in '66 or '67 he made a decision to carry on with just Star drums and it became very successful. Each year the wholesale business increased, and the cymbal manufacturing business got smaller by comparison. In '69 we decided to build a new building for all of the cymbal production and the wholesale drum operation. From the beginning of '70, when we moved to the new building, everything started growing very fast, especially the Japanese products. In those years we doubled our distribution business each year, but for weeks and sometimes for months, we had no time to make new cymbals. So we really built up our company by this distribution business in Germany.

We met our current American distributor, Ambico, in '74. This was exactly the time when we decided to expand our factory operation from a handmade cymbal with a cheap price to real production. We invested a lot of money and went from two people making cymbals to more than ten. The wholesale operation increased to 40 people. We were very successful, especially in the U.S. market, for three or four years. And then, again, we expanded our other business—the distribution side—and didn't have any time to take care of the cymbal factory; it was just running as we had set it up. From '79 through the last part of '82 we just made cymbals as we received orders; we didn't really take care professionally about our cymbal factory. This was a big mistake, because another European manufacturer decided to go into the cheap cymbal market, and, in fact, to try to take over that market. We didn't realize this until our business decreased 60 or 70 percent. To us it was a big surprise that they decided to make a cheap cymbal. They set their prices just one or two percent under ours, so it was really a move against us.

DQ: Up until that time you had stayed with the low-priced cymbals. You weren't trying to break into the pro-cymbal market?

RM: We never had the idea to make pro cymbals because we had enough to do, and we were happy with our low-priced market. We think that we would have stayed with that forever, if this other company hadn't pushed us by taking our market. My father visited several countries, including Japan. In the shops he visited there would sometimes be hundreds of these other cymbals, and we couldn't sell any of ours. Even in Germany they were taking our market share. So in the beginning of '82 we began seriously thinking about what should happen. We had to make a decision whether to close the factory or go a completely new way. The decision was to invest whatever we could—financially and in manpower—and make a new start. The profit that we made from the whole organization—and at this time 95% of it was the distribution business—was spent on modernizing the factory. We bought new machinery especially made to our specifications. We hired new people, we studied the market, and we spent a lot of time working toward a new, better cymbal—a modern cymbal. We had the first result in the autumn of '82 with the *Avanti* cymbal, which was the first cymbal to which something was added—namely a chrome-plated finish—and was a good success for us. In '83 we made the first prototypes of the present *Profile* cymbal, and came out with the *Laser* cymbal line, which was also a very big success for us. We proved to ourselves that we could make a good cymbal, and sell it in a higher price range because the quality was there. We got more modern machinery in the beginning of '84, and started production of the *Profile* cymbals then. This is our biggest success, and many of the improvements and ideas that we got while making the *Profiles* are also going into the cheaper cymbals. And already the result is that the low-priced cymbal that wanted to kill us in the beginning of the '80s is now discontinued.

DQ: Backing up a bit, during the '60s and '70s when your father was exporting the cymbals to America, under what brand name were they marketed? I don't recall any Meinl cymbals being promoted at that time.

RM: We exported a lot to a drum brand called Kent, and the cymbals were sold as part of their drumsets. I would have to ask my father about any others.

DQ: So you were basically supplying cymbals to low-priced drum companies for package sets, rather than selling the individual cymbals?

RM: Yes. We were the supplier of cheap cymbals. That was it.

DQ: Let's talk about marketing strategy and timing. Up until recently, Zildjian and Paiste cymbals were the only serious choices for a pro drummer. But just in the last two years, Sabian has come on strong, while Pearl is now offering cymbals of their own, and there are several other smaller brands being advertised. Do you think that this is really going to be a good time for you to push the *Profile* line in America, since now, instead of being *one* additional new line, you're one *of several*?

RM: I don't think it's going to be a problem. We have a very good distributor in the U.S.—Ambico—who just works for our cymbals. They're a very active company, with many unique new ideas, and they're really good at marketing. They're marketing the *Profile* brand direct to retailers, and marketing the *Camber H* and *Avanti* lines through distributors.

I normally don't like to speak about our competition, but to us, Sabian is not a "new" cymbal, because they produced Zildjian cymbals for a long time in Canada, and it was only the family breakup which happened a few years ago that created Sabian. For me, both are traditional cymbals. It's not our idea to make traditional cymbals. We could, but there is no need for another traditional cymbal. When Paiste came to the forefront of the cymbal market, about 10 or 15 years ago, they were a very modern company, offering a modern cymbal, designed in the '70s. They had a very good chance against the established company who made a traditional cymbal. But now, to us, a cymbal designed in the beginning of the '70s is already a traditional cymbal. It's our feeling that our cymbals are designed *just now,* they're fresh in their concept. Electronic drums were not in existence when Paiste or Zildjian cymbals came out, and even the acoustic drums are very much different when compared to a few years ago.

Recently, a very good drummer we know asked our designer, Mr. Wolfgang Wunder, "Can you make me a cymbal that sounds just like my personal one? I chose it out of hundreds of cymbals, and I love it. If you can make such a cymbal, I'll play it." And we said, "No. We could, but we don't want to do that, because you already *have* your favorite cymbal. Why should we spend our time making a cymbal that already exists? Stay with your cymbal and be happy." Yesterday, he called up, after having tried some of our crashes, and told us that he loves them. Now he goes with us, and is no longer trying to get us to change to his old traditional cymbal set. It's hard to explain, but once drummers play our cymbals, they feel it and they hear it.

DQ: What is it about your cymbals that makes them different? The fact that

E MEINL

by Donald Quade

Cymbal designer Wolfgang Wunder demonstrating the "three-tone" concept of Meinl cymbals.

Stacks of pre-cast cymbal disks as they arrive from the metal fabricator, ready for shaping in the Meinl factory.

Reinhold Meinl displays the difference between a Profile *disk and a more traditional* Dragon *casting.*

they've been designed in the '80s means that you take certain musical trends into account, but how do you actually translate that into manufacturing a cymbal?

RM: One big difference between us and some other brands is that before we make a cymbal, we know what type of cymbal we're going to make. In that way we're similar to Paiste. It's not a case where we just make a cymbal, then somebody listens to it and determines what it is. If we make 100 cymbals, we know we're making 100 of the *same* cymbal. Of course, they're not 100% identical; even with two pieces of the same paper you can find minute differences, and this should be. But our way of production is first to decide what we want to make, and then make it.

Our metal is made for us to very exact specifications. This means that the thickness of the material and the mixture are always identical. Of course, the shape is very important, so we have a production method where we really can keep the shaping consistent, because if the shaping is not right, it's a different cymbal. The kind of hammering that is done also affects the shape, so where other people are hammering by hand, we do it by modern equipment. I can't tell you the latest secrets, but I'm sure we have the most modern production in the world, and the next time you're here, in one or two years, I'll give you the proof.

DQ: Have you done a great deal of research as to your choice of alloys, and the combination of metals?

RM: Yes. Hardness is very important. If the metal is too hard, the cymbal may sound good, but it cracks. If it is too soft, it bends, and it's not good sounding. The important point is to find an alloy that gives a good sound, but also is not prone to cracks or bending. Once you know this alloy, you just must take care that the metal factory supplies you with a perfect batch each time. We test every shipment, and if we find out that they've shipped a wrong one, we return it.

DQ: Does the cost of a cymbal depend more on the combination of metals in it than the fabrication process? It would seem that the labor involved with producing both high- and low-priced cymbals is about the same.

RM: Yes, the alloy is the biggest cost factor. Other cost factors include sales volume and tooling expense. We are not selling the expensive cymbals in big quantities, and we had to make different tooling for each cymbal. Of course we must try to get our investment back within a reasonable time, because otherwise we must stay with the present models forever. We don't know the future; possibly in five years everything will change, and we will have to make completely new tooling and machines to make another modern cymbal.

DQ: Concentrating on the *Profile* line, can you tell me what metals are involved in the alloy?

RM: Just copper and tin—what is known as bronze.

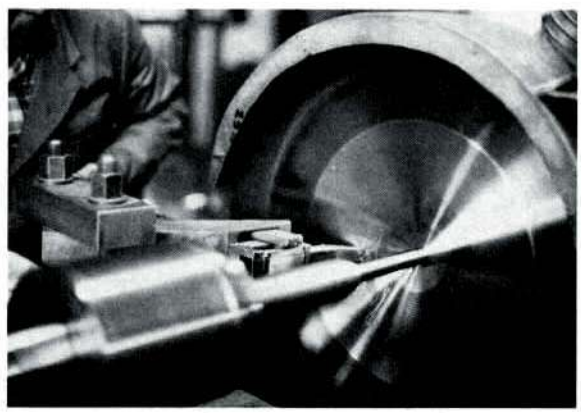
DQ: Are you particularly careful about guarding your formula?

RM: There are no secrets! Whatever cymbal I get into my hands, I need just a day to get its exact formula—the hardness, the mixture of metals, anything. It's no problem, and anybody who says there is a secret is just telling a story. We simply go to our metal supplier, who takes one piece of the metal and puts it into a computer. Within just a few seconds you know everything—in percentages! "7.995% tin, 85.779% copper"—whatever. It shows, with no secrets.

There are some important things that you must instruct your metal maker about when you buy the material. You can't get 100% identical metal every time, so you establish tolerances, and they could be 99% or 101%. The metal comes to us in pre-molded, carefully controlled disks of specified weights and sizes.

DQ: So you don't do any of the casting yourself?

RM: No, and this is a very important point. We believe that nowadays there is no reason to cast your own metal, while there are many reasons to buy it from a very modern and perfect metal supplier. For example, we can be sure that in as many as 500 pieces of metal there will not be even one percent difference. This means



After initial shaping, the cymbals are turned and lathed.

that, if we do it right, we can produce 500 cymbals that are very, very similar. We order the metal and stipulate that it must have a certain diameter, a certain thickness and a certain weight. In the factory we take a disk of a certain size to make a certain model of our cymbals, and it always makes it the same way. Some other cymbal factories have small machinery to make their own molding—they can't have big machinery like the big metal suppliers that are making 1,000 tons a month—and they make their castings one by one. Each one that comes out is a little bit different from the others—either a bit more or less weight, or a bit more or less thickness. The difference between individual cymbals can thus be very large.

DQ: So, really, the only difference between the castings you start with and those the other companies start with is that you have yours made for you?

RM: Yes, and I'll tell you one thing. There are some cymbal manufacturers who speak very badly about this kind of metal, using terms like "cast cymbal" to describe their process and *"printed* cymbal" to describe ours. But you cannot *print* a cymbal. Any metal is cast; you can't print it like stamps. Our metal is cast metal, but it's made by a very modern, clean, fast manufacturer who only makes metal. That manufacturer can make it perfect, following our specifications and keeping it as we want it, for a good price. Once the basic casting is made, the process of making the bell, shaping the cymbal and hammering is very similar between all the companies. We do it by modern machinery, and they do much of it—according to their advertising—by hand. Both methods result in cymbals that people will either like or dislike, depending on their personal tastes, and you cannot say that one way is good and another bad. We *can* say that our quality is stable because we get our metal from a modern factory, and theirs is not so stable because they make it by hand.

DQ: Do you get the metal for your *Dragon* line of all-Chinese cymbals from the same metal supplier?

RM: No. That we get from a supplier in China, so it is authentic. We get the rest of our metal from Europe. The *Dragon* castings are very dirty, and not perfect at all, so each cymbal sounds different. But that's what a China cymbal is all about and it should be like that. It's a very dangerous metal to work with; very possibly if I were to drop one of the castings, it would break like glass. It's very hard to make a cymbal out of. At one point in the process, we have to treat the castings with oil, and to remove the oil we bury the casting in a box of dirt for a while. It's a very simple method, but it's better than any machine. By the way, what those castings look like before we machine them is very similar to what a traditional cymbal casting looks like, so the best way to visualize the difference between "cast" and so-called "printed" cymbals is to compare a *Dragon* casting to one of our *Profile* metal sheets.

DQ: Suppose you want to create a new prototype. You've given a production cymbal to one of your testers in the field, who tries it and says, "Well, I like it, but I need a little more high end," or "... a little more sustain." How do you go about making the change?

RM: With any cymbal, the thing that makes the sound is the tension—the strength or flex in the cymbal—and how that tension is distributed throughout the whole cymbal. The important things are: where you have the greatest tension—the outside, the inside, etc.; how you hammer it; and the size and shape of the bell versus the rest of the cymbal. You could say that the balance of all these things within the cymbal makes the sound. By changing this balance you can add some frequencies or cut them, so the possibilities are endless. The point is whether you can reproduce it or not, and we can do it by our unique way. When a particular drummer tells us, "Make me a special cymbal. I need this, this, and this sound," we always make two, and keep one here. If the drummer doesn't like it, we have the sample as a starting point, and we can hear it physically. When we make a change, we make two cymbals again, and the process continues. Then, when the drummer is satisfied, we have one sample here with the

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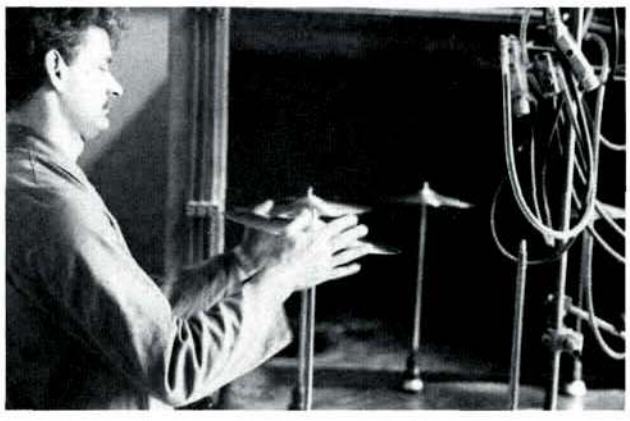
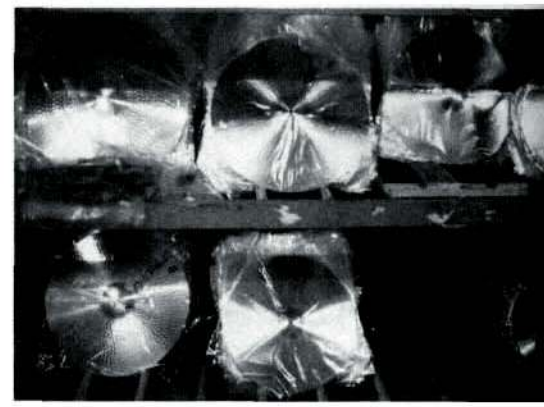


The cymbals are placed on rods, spun, and sprayed with lacquer from above and below.



Finished cymbals individually bagged and ready for shipping.

The final inspection of each cymbal is made on a highly sensitive digital scale. Rejects are sent back for refinishing or remelting; cymbals that pass this inspection are ready for shipping.

The Profile *cymbals receive their logo on this specially designed machine.*

by
Robyn Flans

Photo by Kim Harwood

NIGEL Olsson speaks from the heart. In fact, there seems to be nothing he does that doesn't revolve around his heart. As he plays and sings on stage with Elton John, he uses his entire body to complement the artist's temperment and the song's moods. From the raucus tone of "Crocodile Rock" to the bounce of "Tiny Dancer" and the groove of "Benny And The Jets, "you are made aware that he is feeling the music. On "Levon, " it's the spaces he leaves in the beginning that paint the musical picture, just as his signature fills create the color for the canvas. As he plays the cymbals with only slight bass drum punctuations on the long beginning of "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me, "there is an emotional content evident in his playing. After speaking with Nigel, it comes as no surprise that his favorite Elton John tunes are ballads, for the sensitivity that lives within Nigel emerges unabatedly on those dynamic songs.

While he's had success with his own solo projects, Nigel loves the closeness of the family of musicians—Dee Murray, Davey Johnstone and Elton John—with whom he has been working on and off (mostly on) since 1970. In fact, even though he continues to develop his own talents as an artist, Nigel can't imagine not *playing with Elton. It's been an enriching situation for him and he certainly gives as much as he gets.*

RF: What would you say is required of a drummer doing Elton John's material?

NO: Playing from the heart. I never considered myself a technician at all. I can't do a roll yet. I like to play descriptively—put fills where they accentuate the lyrics. Usually, the drummer tends to play with the bass player. I play with the piano. The music is obviously the total inspiration. The way Elton plays piano is just like on the record, so I tend to go with that.

RF: What's the difference between playing with the bass player and the piano?

NO: I think that playing with the bass player is stricter. When you're playing with the piano, it's more free. That's the way I see it.

RF: Your fills are probably your identifying mark. Is that something you developed?

NO: I didn't practice. I hardly ever practiced. When we start a tour, we usually rehearse for a couple of days, but we don't do long, involved rehearsals. It's only like an hour or an hour and a half, so we can remember the chords. The rest of practicing for me is just being on stage and doing the real thing. I love playing in the studio. In fact, the studio is my favorite part, because of experimentation and sounds.

RF: Did you *ever* have any lessons?

NO: No. I just listened to records. I used to sit at home, put a record on and play along with it. I started out as a singer in a band—I was about 17 or 18—in my hometown in England. One day our drummer left and I could keep the time, so I went back there.

THE HEART OF NIGEL OLSSON

The town I grew up in was really rough, so if you didn't play the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, they used to beat you up. I thought it was great being in the back, hiding behind the cymbals. From then on, I stuck it out. I just sat down and played with records. That's basically how I learned.

RF: That was not young to begin playing. Were there things you worked on in your initial years as a drummer?

NO: I didn't realize how important timekeeping was—to hold it back and keep it. I consider myself a metronome, but I'm not a technician. I hate doing drum solos. I've hardly done any drum solos on stage. I'm just not into that. I like to play with melody and lyrics, rather than doing rock 'n' roll—as in "Crocodile Rock" or "Saturday Night's Alright." I'd much rather play songs like "Candle In The Wind" and "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me." I like to feel and play descriptively and leave out what's not necessary. It's quality, not quantity. Elton's music is so easy to play because it's full of emotion. When we get up there, especially if the audience reacts, it brings the emotion out.

RF: You have a definite style. Do you know how that came about?

NO: It just happened that way. I didn't plan it. 1 try not to plan how I play. It just comes out. When I'm in the studio, I don't like to do more than five or six takes of one song, because after that, it gets a bit stale. I'm not saying that I never play the same thing twice, but I try to make it different each time. If you go over and over a song, you can burn out very quickly.

RF: Who are some of the drummers you dig?

NO: Ringo Starr is my favorite drummer of all time. I also love Russ Kunkel, Bev Bevan, Buddy Rich, Phil Collins, and Levon Helm.

RF: Tell me about your kit.

NO: I designed the drumkit ten years ago and had Slingerland build it for me. They built six kits for me, two of which I still have. But I had it all oversized—outrageous sizes. All wooden rims because in recording, particularly, the wooden rims cut down a lot on rattles and stuff.

RF: Your set the other night in concert didn't have wooden rims, though.

NO: The stage kit has the metal rims, because they are a little bit louder and they travel better. When they built the kit, after they had done the six, they destroyed the molds so there is no chance of any more. There's one studio kit and one stage kit.

RF: Why oversized drums?

NO: Just for tonal quality really. I wanted them as deep as possible because I've always gone for that deep sound. The note carries on longer than a regular drumkit. The length provides the tonal quality.

RF: You've been with Slingerland for ten years.

NO: In fact, eleven-and-a-half years. They built a snare drum for me out of a log on my tenth anniversary, which was a couple of years ago. Occasionally when I break a snare head, I'll use that on stage. They've been very, very good to me. I love Slingerland. We had our problems in the beginning, and I left them at one stage because they weren't coming through with stuff on the road. Something would break down and they would take a couple of weeks to get it to me. But it was straightened out, and now hardly anything breaks on the drumkit, other than heads. It's good to have a good rapport with the company.

RF: Is your stage kit the same as the studio kit in sizes?

NO: Yes. The extended toms are to get that tone I am talking about. They're the standard sizes, but just the elongated shells. The bass drum is like a cannon. It's very, very deep, but not big around. It's only 20". The length gets that big, big sound.

RF: Didn't you originally use a huge, double bass drumkit?

NO: When I first came out here, I had a double bass drumkit with all these weird and wonderful tom-toms all over the place. It was just flash. Then I grew up a little bit. [laughs]

RF: I noticed that you don't have any electronic drums in your setup.

NO: I don't like electronic stuff because it has no feeling. When I say I'm a timekeeper, I can slow down or pick it up, go from light to shade and use color. Electronic drums that you can hit with pads don't talk back to you. They are hard and dead to me. I like something to feel. I like to get response out of it. Plus, I think that, in the studio, it's a waste of time trying to get sounds out of those things. Some people can use them to their best, but I don't feel that I can, so I'm not going to use them. We've used a lot of drum machines on the last couple of albums, which I play along with. That's fun and I like to do that.

RF: Was that difficult to adjust to?

NO: No. You just have to listen to that click. But I found that, if I concentrated too much on listening to a click, it really screwed me up. It's fun because you can get a few different ideas by using the machine, but I don't like playing electronic drums.

RF: A real traditionalist.

NO: The basics. Our band is now back to the basics. We brought in Freddie Mandel on keyboards. I think he's going to be a permanent fixture, because he plays descriptively too. The old band is back together, though, and it's a lot of fun. It's a great feeling to know that your family is there—family meaning band.

RF: Speaking of a larger band, you've worked with Ray Cooper on and off through the years. How does playing with a percussionist alter your playing?

NO: It's fabulous. I enjoy it. In fact, we were trying to get him for this tour, but he's now doing movies and producing with George Harrison. It was amazing to be able to play with him because he is a timekeeper as well. We did a couple of songs with two full drumkits, and I love having two drummers. In fact, on one of my albums, we used two drummers on a track called "Kathy Blue" and "Say Goodbye To Hollywood."

RF: What drummer did you use?

NO: Mike Baird. He's a lovely bloke, and I love the way he plays.

RF: How does your approach to the drums change when you're playing with another drummer or percussionist?

NO: I love two drummers to play exactly the same thing because it sounds great. It's such a big, fat sound. But if we don't do that, one of us can do the fills and one can keep rhythm. That's what Ray and I used to work on—playing together with one doing fills and one keeping time.

RF: What was your role?

NO: [laughs] The fills.

RF: When Ray was playing percussion, did you work out any of it ahead of time?

NO: Not really. It would come together at a rehearsal or a soundcheck, and then we'd work on it day to day. After the gig, we would pick things apart. If something had come up, we'd say, "Oh, keep that in. Let's do this together here," but we wouldn't sit down and write down what we would do.

RF: Do you have a preference for working with or without a percussionist?

NO: I don't really have a preference. It would be nice to have Cooper in again, though, because I enjoyed working with him.

RF: You wear headphones when you play.

NO: Yes, and I have a 24-channel Model 15 Tascam mixer and echo chamber, which I feel keeps me much tighter with the band. In some auditoriums, the echo is incredible. You hit the drum and hear it two seconds later. So I have it all there in headphones. It's like having my own studio on stage and I can mix my own sound. What we usually do is have it all set up with all the EQ's and stuff. Then when we get on stage, if I need to hear it a little bit louder, I don't have to call out to the person on the side doing the monitors. Because we don't have roaring stage monitors on the drum riser, we get a much tighter sound out of the drums.

RF: You also wear gloves.

NO: Yes. It keeps the blisters down, somewhat.

RF: You don't find it difficult keeping a grip on the stick?

NO: No. It's easier to keep a grip. I've been wearing gloves for about 12 years and

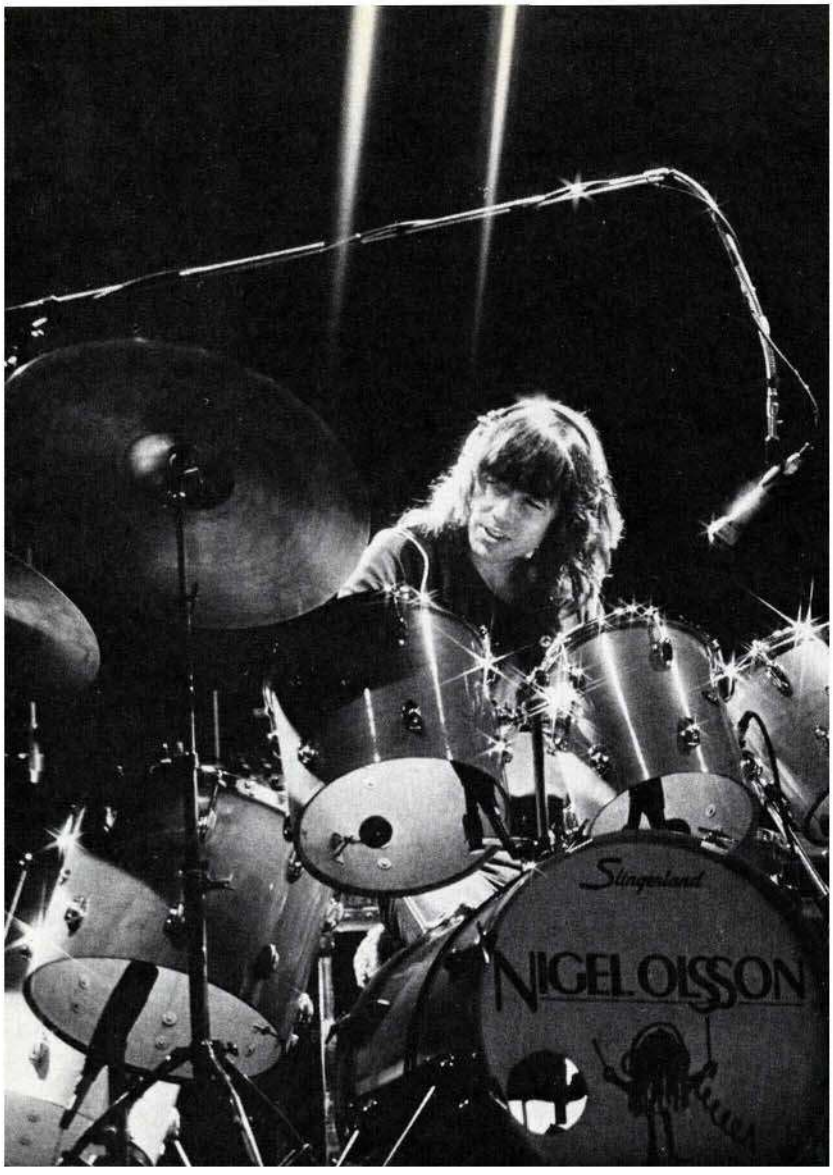


Photo by Kim Hanwood

it saves the hands.

RF: How did the gig with Elton come about?

NO: I started professionally with a group called Plastic Penny. A bunch of studio musicians made a record with a producer, released the record, it was a hit and the record company had to put a band together very quickly to promote the record. I did the audition and got the gig. We were handled by Dick James Music Publishing company, which had the Beatles, Spencer Davis, and the Hollies. Elton and Bernie were writing for Dick James Music. I was with Plastic Penny for about two years and we struggled to get another hit, which never happened. Spencer Davis called me and asked if I would come to America for about a nine-week tour. I had known Dee Murray also through Dick James Music from a band called Mirage. Dee was with the Spencer Davis Group at the time, so I joined, did the tour and came back. Nothing happened for a long, long time. I was sort of poverty stricken at that point. Then a guy named Roger Hodgsen called me up and said they had this guy who was backing them. They were rehearsing to go into the studio and then on the road. They turned out to be Supertramp eventually. I only rehearsed with them. Then, out of the blue, I was asked to join Uriah Heep. I was with them for nine gigs when Elton asked me to do a promotional gig at the Roundhouse in London, to promote his album. It was supposed to be just a one-off gig. So we started rehearsing for that and something clicked. It was like, "Wow, this is magic. This is what I want to play." It really all happened from there. We did a very slight tour in Britain and Dick James sent us over here to play the Troubadour in L.A., the Troubadour in San Francisco and a club in Boston. All hell broke loose. It was amazing. It's like a fairy tale. It was only Elton, Dee and myself in the band, and Bernie [Taupin] used to come with us all the time. It was unbelievable, and it still is. It just went like crazy. We still can't believe it sometimes when we get on stage and the crowd's reaction is so amazing. We just look at each other. I wouldn't want to do anything else. There's the money, the houses and the cars, but it gets tough out there sometimes when you're traveling around, never unpacking your suitcase and missing the family. I have a son two-and-a-half-years old, and have been married three-and-a-half years, so I miss my family. But I wouldn't want to do anything else.

RF: How do you reconcile being away so much?

NO: I don't know. My son, Justin, is as close to heaven as I've ever been. He's fabulous. He's a funny little guy. He understands that when I go away to work I'm playing the drums with Elton, Dee and Davey [Johnstone]. If mom comes out, he'll be on the phone saying, "Mom is with daddy because daddy is working, and mom will be home soon and daddy will follow soon." He kind of understands. He's a rock 'n' roll baby. And he has fun on the road when he comes. Everybody makes a fuss over him and it's great. It's a very family-oriented group of people.

RF: How do you deal with being on tour when you want to be home?

NO: Sometimes I have to cut it off, because if I let it get to me, it can be a disaster. I'm a very emotional person, and if I let it get to me, I go into a deep depression. It frightens me sometimes. I want to be with them, but I owe it to them to be doing what I'm doing. That's when it gets real tough. But my wife is very understanding and so is Justin.

RF: You mentioned before that you love the studio. When you first went into the studio with Elton, how much studio experience had you had?

NO: Hardly any at all. On the earlier albums, up to H*onkey Chateau,* the group wasn't used. Elton used studio players. Dee and I only played on a couple of songs on the earlier albums.

RF: How did you feel about that? It's such a common problem.

NO: In the beginning, the band was so new and he had always used studio players. It was kind of a drag that we weren't used. We used to make all our records in London, but then suddenly when we went away to record at the Chateau in Paris, where we lived together, things changed.

RF: What was your initial reaction in the recording studio? Were you scared?

NO: Yes, I was. It sounded so different when 1 went into the control room and listened back. In the beginning, I overplayed. This is when eight-track recording first came about and you could get the drums in stereo. I realized that, if I did a fill around the tom-toms, I could hear that traveling across the speakers. So I did fills all over the place. And Gus Dudgeon said, "You have to calm down." So I guess Gus was the man who put me onto the road of leaving out and I love him for that. But I remember, I used to get crazy—stereo freak.

RF: What about time-wise?

NO: I felt it hard to keep the time. I guess it was just the excitement and getting that adrenaline from finally being in the studio with Elton. Once I started thinking too much about it, I lost the time. Now I don't have any problem.

RF: What are some of the songs that you really enjoyed playing back then?
NO: "Candle In The Wind" has always been my favorite. *Yellow Brick Road* was my favorite album and still is, and *Captain Fantastic.* As I said earlier, it is basically the ballads that 1 love. I'm not really into the heavy rock 'n' roll. I hate heavy metal music. I can play more descriptively in the ballads. Rock 'n' roll has been done all the time.
RF: Do you have creative freedom in the studio?
NO: That's the great thing about recording with Elton. When we're in the studio, once the guys get the chords together, we basically play it the way we feel it. That's again why we like to do it in six takes: It's fresher that way. We're never told what to do. In fact, when we finish the tracks, Elton usually leaves and we finish the backgrounds, guitar overdubs and such. The backgrounds are an integral part of our band. We have our own background sound. I love doing that—again, from the heart.
RF: Can you recall any particularly difficult or imaginative tracks?
NO: There was a track on *Fantastic* called "Better Off Dead" that we recorded at Caribou Ranch. On the rest of the album, the sound of the drums was great, but I felt I wanted a different sound on that. I talked to Gus about it and said, "Let's put an effect or something on the drums." So we used a harmonizer when harmonizers first came out, before Syndrums or electronic stuff. We put the drums through a harmonizer so it had like a delay on it. He just played the track down to me and I was fooling around, testing stuff. We got to the end of the song and Gus said, "Come and hear that" and I said, "No, let me do it again." He said, "No, don't do it again. Listen." This effect was so amazing, that even though it was a run-through for me, we kept it. That felt really good.

We learned a lot in the studio just through trial and error, and being able to experiment. That's the beauty of this whole thing. Elton doesn't have the major say. We all have a part in it, and it turns out for the best. Most of the stuff we've done has been cut within the first six takes.
RF: Which songs were one-takers?
NO: "Candle In The Wind," "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" and "Daniel" were first takes. "Daniel" was written in 15 minutes and recorded in two hours. It's that magic that he has. It's a unit—a family—and it's great. We've had the same crew for about nine years.
RF: Can you recall any other interesting anecdotes about tunes you've recorded?
NO: On "Passengers," from the latest album, we recorded the background outside in a field with all the chefs and people who help out at the studio. We set the microphones up outside near the swimming pool in a field. It was just done that way to get a vocal effect, which I guess, you wouldn't get the gist of unless you heard the record through headphones. It's the lunacy of the record industry.

Also on "Passengers," we didn't close mike the drums. Usually, we have them close and underneath, but on this one, we just used two microphones—one on the snare drum and one on the bass drum. It just opened up the sound. It's not that closer sound we usually have. It was just to get the African-type atmosphere.

After doing "All The Girls Love Alice" from the *Yellow Brick Road* album, I got a call from Gus Dudgeon, the producer. We had come back from France where we had recorded it, and he was mixing it down in London. I was out at the farm when he called me up and said, "Can you get a stereo tape machine and a microphone, put the microphone at the back end of your car and record the car pulling away, then at high speed, then stopping and starting again?" So I had my little brother hang out of the back window of my car recording these sounds while I was roaring down a country road. In "Alice," when you hear the ambulance coming and all the roaring and screaming, it's my car that you hear.
RF: Was it hard for you to deal with the parting of the ways in 1976?
NO: Not really, because I always wanted to do my own stuff, so it gave me a push to say, "Okay, it's your turn now, Nigel. You have to go out and fend for yourself. You can't hide behind the cymbals anymore." So 1 made a record for Rocket Records, which didn't do very well. Then we joined up again.
RF: Why was *Rock Of The Westies* dedicated to you and Dee?
NO: I don't know. I never found out. I never found out really why he split the band up. But he's impulsive, and when he goes for something, that's it. The second time we split, I went to Atlanta and recorded there for Bang Records. I had two-and-a-half hit records. I say half because one didn't do as well as the others. It was fun doing that. I was putting a band together to tour and had a real bad car crash, which did me in. The other guy died, so it was rough. I still think about it. That stopped me from putting a group together. I'm basically afraid of being the frontman. I can be a frontman if I'm on *American Bandstand* in front of cameras, but on stage ....
RF: I expected you to be a lot less shy from press I'd seen on you.
NO: I've always been . . .
RF: Schizophrenic?
NO: Yes. I've always been a schiz. I like to sit back and take in what's going on. I'm a watcher and a listener. I've learned from other people's mistakes. I've always been basically shy, though. I've never wanted to be the frontman on stage. I like coming out front when we do "Too Low For Zero," but anything more than that, I like to be back there, keeping the time.
RF: How were you going to set up your own group?
NO: My producer James Stroud is also a drummer, and he was going to come out. We were going to use two drummers. Half of the time I would play with them, and the other half I would get up front and sing. It was almost to rehearsal. Anyway, I'm glad that it didn't happen. I don't know how good it would have been. I didn't have the confidence to be a frontman and be the one who had to make all the decisions.
RF: Do you find it difficult singing and playing at the same time?
NO: Yes. There are still some things that we can do in the studio, background-wise, that I can't do on stage because it's an intricate vocal part and I have to do a fill over it. It's hard with your feet going one way, your arms going another and your mind going yet another way. It can really screw you up. But I like to sing. I enjoy singing from the heart. I'm no Frank Sina-

continued on page 104

Photo by Kim Harwood

by Tracy Borst

Swing Drummers In The Movies

A few blocks from the Musicians Union building in Hollywood, it's actually possible to view a motion picture history of the great drummers of the swing era. The U.C.L.A. Film Library provides a miraculous opportunity to step back into the past and enjoy the performances of such drummers as Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Ray Bauduc and Cliff Leeman, both aurally and visually. In a recent issue of *The Big Bands* magazine, editor/drummer Sandy Beck stated that perhaps two of the best filmed sequences of drumming in movies were Gene Krupa with his band in *Some Like It Hot,* and Buddy Rich with Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra in *Ship Ahoy.* Since I could not recall either of the films turning up on late-night television for over 20 years, it seemed that some research was in order.

Some Like It Hot (released by Paramount in 1939 and not to be confused with the 1959 picture of the same name) was the first of several movies that featured Gene Krupa with his own band. The film introduced the title number, and "The Lady's In Love With You," both by Frank Loesser and Burton Lane. On sheet music copies, Gene Krupa and his orchestra received third billing, next to rising comedian Bob Hope and singer Shirley Ross. A large picture of Gene at his white pearl Slingerland set dominates the cover, with Hope and Ross receiving head photos. It's also interesting to note the depth of the acting role given to Krupa. In effect, it's the third *leading* role in the film.

The band itself has two feature numbers: "Wire Brush Stomp" and "Blue Rhythm Fantasy," both arranged by Elton Hill with Chappie Willett. The "Wire Brush Stomp" scene is set in the arcade of an amusement park and the camera stays mostly with the band, panning only briefly to the two principals, and then to the crowd that begins to jitterbug in front of the bandstand. Krupa's routine in this number alone must have sent a generation of young drummers to further investigate the fine art of brush playing. Krupa had brought wire brushes to prominence as a prime tool for the drummer in his performance with the Benny Goodman Trio and Quartet. The *Gene Krupa Drum Method,*

The arcade scene from Some Like It Hot *shows Krupa and friends at the climax of the "Wire Brush Stomp" number. Note the angle of the snare drum and the three holes in the shell near the batter head, indicating that Krupa had removed the internal muffler.*

Ship Ahoy, *released in 1942, featured the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra with Buddy Rich in the drum chair, and Frank Sinatra (far right). It's interesting to note that Buddy and Frank continue to concertize together some 42 years after this photo was taken.*

Some Like It Hot, *with Shirley Ross and Bob Hope (center), also featured Krupa's classic "Blue Rhythm Fantasy. " Note the toms affixed to each music stand.*

Buddy Rich and Eleanor Powell perform their incredible musical routine during the "I'll Take Tallulah" numberfrom MGM's Ship Ahoy.

THOMMY PRICE

DRUM PARTS AND THE STORY OF THE SONG

Thommy Price plays hard with Billy Idol, but stays sensitive to the music around him. He'd rather build his drum parts by feeling the mood projected by the song.

"My first consideration is playing to the song, not just as a drummer in the band. That's what I do *all* the time, no matter whether its Billy's band, or Scandal, or whatever.

"I'd rather learn the song, listen to the lyrics. If the guy's talking about fallin' asleep on a sleeping on rock or a beach somewhere, then it's gonna be a lazy kind of thing. But if it's something like "Rebel Yell" you want to kick it *hard*. I play the way I feel about the song, from the heart, all out.

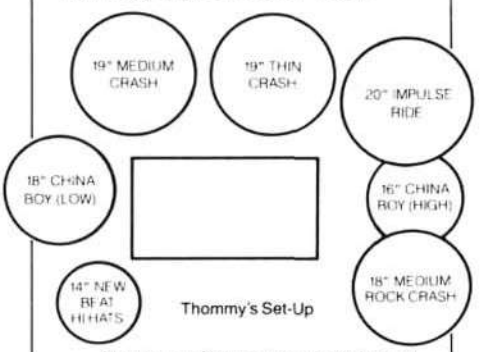
"I can adjust to anything I have to if I feel right about doing it. Rock & roll is definitely what I do best. I don't get hired for anything else."

As a rock & roll *specialist*, Thommy chooses the kinds of cymbals best suited to the music he's playing.

"With Billy, it's a little more edge-ey and more rock & roll, so I like to use heavier cymbals which *ring* more and are real penetrating. I always know what I'm looking for. In a live situation, I was looking for a loud set-up, but with different sounds, not just noise. Like brighter or darker sounds. You see lots of Heavy Metal drummers and they've all got these Crash cymbals around their set, and they all sound the same. There's a limited amount of extra noise in our band.

"I use my 19" Zildjian Crashes all the time as basic Crash cymbals. I use my Hi Hats for timekeeping. From them, I want a real detailed sound, real sharp 'cause that's important in the songs. I also use the Impulse Ride for the bell. And what's great about that cymbal is no matter where you hit it, it sounds even."

Thommy is a totally visual drummer and his choice of Zildjians is also based on helping him to get a particular "look" across to the audience.



Thommy's Set-Up

All cymbals in Brilliant finish (except Impulse)

"I changed over to the Brilliants and the lighting guys had all of these ideas of how to light 'em all of a sudden."

Thommy has confidence in his Zildjians because they don't fall apart under the sonic impact of Billy Idol's supercharged rock & roll power.

"Zildjians really don't break and they keep their sound a lot longer than other cymbals. I have this really old Ping Ride and it still sounds great. These cymbals really cut.

"There is a bottom end to these cymbals that other cymbals don't have. Other cymbals have all the sound on top but Zildjians are like a Harley. And that's good for me, 'cause I need that power, that 'drive' underneath. They're real throaty."

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Thommy Price plays with Billy Idol.

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published in 1938 and still in print, devoted over two pages to brush instruction. The Slingerland catalog carried a listing for the book as late as 1976, with an ad stating that the Krupa method "shows his exciting brush beats."

The arcade scene sets in motion events that soon allow the Krupa band to appear at the largest nightclub in the park. There, they perform "Blue Rhythm Fantasy," which was used as a closing number in Krupa's stage shows as late as 1941. Itisavisually impressive number, with all the band members playing a definite part on the special tom-toms affixed to their music stands. Those who saw the routine performed in theaters would remember the exciting effect that Krupa managed with the use of red and blue stage lights, and one wonders how vivid this might have been on screen with today's color photography.

Ship Ahoy was a 1942 MGM release starring Red Skelton and Eleanor Powell. The Tommy Dorsey band was then a star-studded organization of great instrumentalists such as Buddy Rich, Ziggy Elman, Don Lodice and Heinie Beau, and a great vocal department that included Frank Sinatra, Jo Stafford & The Pied Pipers, and Connie Haines. The picture opens with the Dorsey band playing "Hawaiian War Chant," which features Elman and Rich. Later in the film, the band does an extended version of "I'll Take Tallulah," an E. Y. Harburg-Burton Lane show tune that has Rich coming down front to do a sensational dance-and-drum routine with Eleanor Powell.

The Warner Brothers Vitaphone, *Artie Shaw And His Orchestra,* has a 1948 copyright; however, the film opens with "Begin The Beguine," where we find the 1938 Shaw band with Cliff Leeman on drums. The Shaw band appears again in *A Class In Swing,* a Paramount headliner with Buddy Rich on drums. The closer is "Shoot The Likker To John Boy," featuring Rich working with only one floor tom.

In a 1938 Bob Crosby short for Paramount, we find Charlie Spivak, Bob Haggart, Yank Lawson, Eddie Miller and drummer Ray Bauduc. Bauduc's array of temple blocks for "Pagan Love Song" is clearly in view in this feature spot, along with his wood-rim Ludwig snare drum. Bauduc is also credited by Crosby with composing the closing number, "South Rampart Street Parade."

In Paramount's *Big Broadcast Of 1937,* the Benny Goodman band performs "Bugle Call Rag" and the close-ups favor Gene Krupa. Here Gene is using a small, nontunable tom-tom on the bass drum, and observant viewers will note that Slingerland had yet to separate the tension rods on the snare and bass drums.

Perhaps one very important point that should be made here is that a vast amount of drumming history is actually in terrible danger of disintegration. Most of these features and shorts were made in the '30s and '40s on nitrate film. While many are still in good condition, some are beginning to crumble. Surely, somewhere in the jazz or educational field, forces could be brought together to rescue this treasure of musical performance.

According to Howard Hayes, director in charge of the U.C.L.A. film collection, "The rights to virtually all films are owned by someone; however, the short subjects were 'bottom of the barrel' stuff to the film companies. The copyrights on some may have been allowed to expire. The Paramount films were donated to U.C.L.A., but the rights are still owned by Universal. The Warner Brothers films are on deposit with the rights controlled by MGM-UA. If someone were to use these films for educational purposes, perhaps grants could be arranged for tax write-offs—but it should be done soon."

This is not a matter of nostalgia, but rather, the chance to see and hear how the motion picture camera captured many of our great players, some at their peak, others just approaching it. Unfortunately, time is the natural enemy of fragile negatives, and the motion picture record of many of these players is slipping away each day. Unless action is taken to preserve these performances, future generations of drummers will never know how Buddy combined his dancing and drumming skills in *Ship Ahoy,* or if Gene's colorful fantasy kept *Some Like It Hot* even warm.

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Losing Your Grip

by James E. Murphy

If you're like me, perhaps the most embarrassing moment in your life as a drummer occurs when you go for a fill, and halfway through it you lose a stick. Even if you have spares close by, you have caught yourself and your band by surprise, and lost a beat or two fumbling for a new stick. More often than not, losing a stick is caused by sweaty hands, a slick stick surface, improper grip, or a combination of all three. Assuming your grip is not the problem, what can be done with wet hands and slick sticks?

Methods For The Sticks

Let's deal with the sticks first. If you use wood sticks and they are coated or sealed with lacquer-type finish, the finish can become slick when combined with perspiration, making the sticks hard to control. This finish can be sanded off in the grip area (some drummers sand the entire stick) or filed with a fine file or wood rasp.

The lacquer coating is applied to help preserve the stick and retard warpage and excess wear, so some drummers are quite hesitant to sand it off. If you do not wish to sand it off, or you still need additional grip after sanding, you can *wrap* the sticks in the grip area. This is done by applying friction, gaffers, or electrician's tape to the entire grip area. You may have to experiment with types and brands to find one that provides a sticky yet smooth surface for your hands. Too rough a surface can often cause blisters. Mechanical Music Corporation offers *Stick Handler* tape, which comes in a variety of colors. Each roll will treat up to 100 sticks. Write M.M.C. at 622 Hickory Drive, Buffalo, IL 60090. A similar product is *Powergrip,* available in red or black, from Powergrip Inc., P.O. Box 940295, Atlanta, GA 30340.

At least one company offers a "liquid rubber grip" material that is packaged much like brush-on paint in a can. Its main purpose is for hand tools such as pliers, screw drivers and hammers, and it is applied by dipping the tool directly into the rubber solution. When dry, the material becomes a sturdy rubber coating that resists slipping and improves grip. This material works best on sticks that have been sanded before dipping. It is available at most large hardware and tool stores, or by writing to Brookstone Tools, 118 Brookstone Building, Peterborough, NH 03458.

One company markets products called "stick control rings." These are constructed of nylon and consist of a snap ring for each stick and a swiveling snap ring for a finger on each hand. While they may seem awkward at first, the nylon makes the rings very light, and after a short break-in period they make it nearly impossible to lose a stick. They will also make it easier to twirl your sticks, with a little practice. They are available from Twirlastick, Box 5126, Dept. M.D., Poland, OH 44514.

Methods For The Hands

After the sticks have been treated, you may wish to explore various methods of dealing with perspiration on your hands. Many drummers have developed the habit of wearing athletic sweat bands on their wrists to soak up perspiration before it gets to their hands. These are quite effective, and relatively cheap, too. When used in conjunction with a large towel, they will keep your hands *and* sticks dry. I would suggest having several pairs and rotating them during a performance as soon as they get wet. You should also wash them frequently so they'll be fresh for the next gig.

To help keep the hand itself from sweating, some drummers apply products directly to their hands. Any form of talcum powder or just straight talc will help keep sweat from forming on your palms. You must be careful though, since most talc or powder in itself is quite slick, and applying too much could actually worsen your problem. Dust your palms lightly to start with and always try it at home *before* you try it on stage. Some powders come in a spray can, which you may find more convenient on stage.

Another spray product you may wish to try is one of the many anti-perspirants. I know one drummer who swears by them, and he is a "heavy sweater." These products, like the powders, should be applied lightly at first, since they may make your hands gummy, or even close off your pores, if applied too heavily. The sprays can be kept close by and reapplied throughout the performance if needed, but use discretion as to when you do it. Time it to coincide with a break, or during a talk section of the performance.

A sports-related item you might wish to try is a bowlers' grip solution. This type of product is used by bowlers to help them keep their grip on the ball. Most come in a cream or lotion form which is rubbed into the palm and finger areas of the hand. They give your hand that "tacky" feeling, much like a rubber grip or gaffers tape. You will probably want to wash this off immediately after playing, so be prepared by carrying soap or some towelettes with you. Two good sources for this solution are *Claro Grip Cream Solution,* Claro Labs Inc., South Bend, IN 46613, and *Pro-Grip,* DBA Products Co., St. Louis, MO 63104. You may want to check at local sport shops and bowling alleys before writing.

By far the most popular stick-gripping method among drummers with sweaty hands is the drum glove. Golf gloves (matched in pairs), batters' gloves and even rubber surgical gloves dusted inside with powder are all being used with great success. With the popularity of gloves increasing there is now at least one line of gloves strictly for drummers, offered by Beato Musical Products, P.O. Box 725, Wilmington, CA 90748. Write to them, or try to visit a drum shop that has them on display, so you can check their fit, style, appearance and price before buying.

Protecting Your Hands

The purpose of wearing drum gloves is actually two-fold: to provide a better grip on the stick, and at the same time, to help prevent one of the drummer's worst and most dreaded enemies—blisters. If you've experienced blisters and tender spots while playing, you know just how painful and distracting they can be. Gloves help cut down on the tremendous friction between stick and skin. If you find the gloves rubbing your hands slightly, try dusting your hands lightly with powder before putting them on. This will also help the gloves go on much easier. Gloves, like sweat bands, will eventually soak up a lot of sweat, so they should be rotated with a second pair and allowed to dry out. Upon drying, they may become stiff and need some breaking in again, so try to put them on long enough before a performance to allow them to

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A big problem related to playing and sweating involves the condition of your hands themselves. Besides getting blisters, your hands can become extremely dry, and split or crack. Cold weather, wind and exposure may also affect your hands. During cold weather, always wear winter gloves going to and from the performance, and treat any cracked, dry or peeling skin with an adequate hand lotion. If your body holds an excess amount of fluid, your hands may swell. You may want to see a doctor if such swelling is a serious problem for you. Otherwise, try to exercise or flex your hands before playing to loosen them up.

There are currently several stick manufacturers who have realized the drummers' slick stick problem and are offering some built-in solutions. Textured grip areas, non-lacquered finishes, rubber grips and even tapered grip areas are now available on some very popular models. Don't overlook these. Shop around and see what these sticks have to offer. If the added cost is higher than some of the homemade treatments, go to work and customize your favorite sticks to *your* specifications. You'll avoid that embarrassing moment I spoke of at the beginning of this article, and you won't have to walk the entire stage after the gig to gather up all your sticks.

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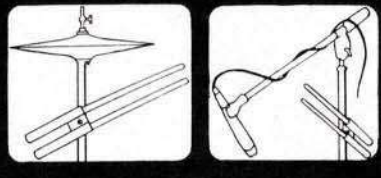

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Jeff Klaven

Jeff Klaven holds a unique position. He's the only American member of Krokus, an otherwise Swiss rock band loosely categorized as heavy metal by most rock magazines. An opportunity to walk into the drum chair for a group with several gold and platinum albums to their credit as well as worldwide touring schedules doesn't come often to a young Midwestern drummer, and Jeff is naturally thrilled. But he's also confident, due to a solid professional history that belies his youth. He begins this interview with a brief outline of his drumming background.

JK: Like a lot of other drummers, I saw the Beatles on the *Ed Sullivan Show* when I was nine, and from that point on I was hooked. My dad teaches art at Milliken University in Illinois, where I was raised. He had these paintbrushes laying around that were about drumstick length. I'd get those and just start pounding on things. I used things that were stretched, so I could get bounce . . . like those big punching balloons; I'd stick one between my legs and play on that. I played along with another guy who lived down the street; he had an acoustic guitar and I'd pound on wastepaper baskets. Everybody was laughing at us. Of course, when we got our real equipment, they all wanted to be in the band.

I guess I got my first drumset just before I turned 11. I was in several copy bands from then on, until I got into high school. At that point, I joined a band in which I worked with some older musicians. I learned a lot from those older guys. We started doing all original stuff. We lived down on a farm in the Illinois country, and had our own studio. We weren't making much money, because we couldn't let go of enough of our musical integrity to make money playing covers. That was the "artistic" period of my career. It was a very hard time, but I learned so much about the business and about writing during that period that I would never go back and do it any other way. But after a while, it started getting a little old, and I started to look at going to school. Since my dad was teaching at Milliken, I could go there free if I wanted to. So I went to music school for two years.

RVH: That's the first time you've mentioned instruction. Had you ever had any other formal drum instruction at any time prior to college?

JK: No. I learned mostly just from listening to records. That created an interesting situation for me. I'm left-handed, but I play a right-handed setup. When I first got my set, I never knew there was any difference; I just looked at pictures to see how other drummers set up their drums and that's the way I did it. I think that actually helps me play this heavy rock style of music, because the backbeat is the whole trip. I've got more power in my left hand, but with the right-handed setup, it's used for the backbeat.

RVH: Back to Milliken University.

JK: Right. I went to two years of music school there, and I wasn't in a band during that period. Milliken has a very good music department, but it's primarily classical. If you didn't get into the jazz bands—and it was a small enough school that they only had two—then you were really stifled by the classical stuff if that wasn't what you wanted. But during those two years I would go to the clubs, just itching to play. This one band that I really liked—George Faber & Stronghold—used to play at one particular club all the time, and I would just beg them to let me sit in. They were doing a lot of funk stuff, like James Brown and Wilson Pickett. Some time along there, I decided that school was not happening for me, and that I wanted to move to L.A., and be a studio drummer. I went into this club where George was playing and told the drummer, "I'm going to quit school to play." And he said, "Well, I'm going to quit playing to go to school." From sitting in, I knew half of their songs already, so we just switched places. I was in that band for about three years. That's also when I got hooked up with Butch Stone, who's Krokus' manager now, but who was managing George at the time. We played in Memphis, about one week out of every six, for about a two-year stretch. We had a very good following there. Also, because I kept playing there, I met a lot of the musicians, including Keith Sykes. He had a deal with Back Street Records. They had just released Keith's second album, and his drummer quit. I happened to be playing in Memphis, and he asked me to join his band. I was looking for a way out of George's band anyway, so I moved down to Memphis and started playing country-rock and rockabilly with Keith Sykes. But his second record didn't do anything, so that started to slip too. When I got to Memphis, there was a band called Cobra being put together, around an ex-guitar player from Krokus. They had some showcases that they were going to do, but they didn't have a drummer. So they asked me if I'd want to do the showcases. I said I would, and if we got a deal I'd join the band. We got a deal with Epic, and put out an album, which was great but got caught up in the corporate shuffle and didn't go anywhere. Then the guitar player split. Butch also managed that band, so I've been together with him for about six years. Anyway, Krokus was just going off the road. They had fired Steve Pace, their previous drummer, and I asked Butch to get me an audition. I was in Memphis, and Butch's office was in Arkansas, and that's where they were going to do their pre-production for the next album. I drove over, did an audition, and they decided that they liked me.

RVH: That explains how an American drummer got hooked up with a Swiss rock band.

JK: Right. I got the gig because I had worked for Butch previously in George Faber's band and Cobra.

RVH: When did that happen?

JK: That was in January of '84.

RVH: George Faber played R&B. Keith Sykes played country-rock and rockabilly. What did Cobra play?

JK: Some heavy stuff, though not quite as heavy as past Krokus stuff—sort of like a heavy Foreigner—not quite that soft, but not heavy metal either.

RVH: At least it was transitional for you. You didn't walk out of R&B and country-rock bands straight into a concert heavy rock band.

JK: Cobra was the first really heavy rock music I had ever played, besides doing Led Zeppelin covers in copy bands. So if it weren't for Cobra I wouldn't have been able to make the transition. In fact, when Butch first mentioned my name to the guys in Krokus, they were afraid that I was going to be too soft, too. And I wasn't even sure if I was going to be able to do it, but I said, "Just get me the audition and I'll do the best I can." As it turns out, they're happy with it, because over a period of three or four albums, Krokus wants to make a transition: not to stay as heavy as we have been in the past, yet not just to jump into a totally different style of music either. So maybe I helped on that, because I know I'm not a heavy metal drummer. I guess I'm a rock 'n' roll drummer.

RVH: How long had Krokus been together prior to your joining them?

JK: I think they've been together since '75 or '76. And I heard an interesting story the other day: They started out a lot more "jazzy" or however you want to phrase it.

by Rick Van Horn

They just changed with the changing popularity of styles.

I think it's important for musicians to be able to do that sort of changing. I know how to play funk and James Brown. I'm not using it now, but still there's something that you get from that, just the knowledge of how to do it. I hate to see a drummer or any musician who can only play one style and that's it. There are certain styles that I like to play better than others, but I feel privileged that I've had the opportunity to learn a lot of different styles, even though I may not use them all right now.

RVH: You joined the group and almost immediately went into the studio. What was the outcome of that?

JK: The outcome was my first album with Krokus, which was released this past summer. It's called *The Blitz* and it's doing nicely on the American and European heavy metal charts.

RVH: "Heavy metal" conjurs up all sorts of visual impressions, as well as aural ones. What type of image does Krokus try to project?

JK: Visually, we're going to be very positive. There's a big flood of heavy metal bands whose lyrics, dress, and whole package is very negative, and very destructive. We really don't agree with that at all. Our clothes are very colorful—very "party." Not "get drunk and strangle somebody" but "party—have a good time." That's the image for us—no Satanic images. Of course, we have to be very careful, because the last album, *Headhunter,* went gold, so that means 500,000 people are going to want to buy the next album. We can't totally cut them out and forget about them. We still have to keep some roots, but like I said, over the next three albums we want to keep getting more positive and involve more musical craft.

RVH: What type of equipment are you using?

JK: I use Sonor drums and Paiste cymbals, mainly because Paistes are made in Switzerland and Sonor drums are made in Germany. Krokus had established relationships with both companies. So I fell right into that. I got the endorsement with Paiste and Sonor when I was with Cobra, actually.

RVH: Please run down your kit.

JK: Two bass drums, two snare drums, two mounted toms and a mounted floor tom, then a regular floor tom. Regular depths—no power toms. I didn't get to pick out my set, because I wasn't over there, so I just had to kind of let them guess at it. My joining the band happened so fast.

If I were over there, I would probably pick out some different stuff. I like drums where the size differences are very exaggerated as you go down the line—a very small tom, then a big difference, and then another big difference, etc. I think the sizes 1 have now are too close together, but it'll work out. I use three crashes, a *Rude* ride, and a pang. Originally, for this tour I was going to put two bass drums up in the air on either side of me, because it's a very visual thing. I was going to mount Simmons pads in them, so that from the audience they'd look like bass drums, but 1 could hit them and get thunder, or a flat tire, or anything I wanted. Then I started looking around, and a lot of drummers have already got that kind of thing. So now, I still plan to have the Simmons pads, but the cages they're going to be in are going to be some sort of wild space image.

RVH: What else do you do with the group?

JK: I do some background singing, and Mark [Storace] the lead singer, and I, wrote all the lyrics for this album together. I've always written songs on my own; I play a little guitar. I think that's something else that helped me get the job. I thought Steve Pace was a great drummer, but I think they needed a little more—someone to help with the writing and other aspects of the group's performance as well.

RVH: You're coming in to a group that already has several albums out. Naturally, on the next tour you'll be performing not only material from the new album on which you played, but some of the material recorded before you joined the group. How will you approach playing material that someone else originated?

JK: There are a couple things I'll do differently, but drumming for this style of music, to me, is very simple. It's hard in that you have to know what you're doing, but it's very simplistic playing. There are really not that many different directions you can go in—not that much stylistic identity. The things that you have to be good at in this kind of music are the energy and the groove. And I think that, for me, the epitome of the drummer who does it best is Phil Rudd with AC/DC. I think that, if you listen to him, you'll notice that the 2's and 4's on the snare drum are way ahead of the beat—very "on top." In between the beats you just start to relax and then "uhh!": It kicks again. It's still 1 and 3 on the bass drum and 2 and 4 on the snare drum, but it's got to have that energy. Other than that, it's very, very simple playing. So when you ask me if I would change a part, or how I would play it, I'd have to say I really don't have that many choices.

I think a problem a lot of drummers have is that they try to be more interesting than is really needed. If you go to see a jazz band—even a very good jazz band—there

will probably be, at the most, 1,000 people. Most jazz is performed in a small bar, where you're very close and you can hear everything that's done. If you're playing in front of 20,000 people, they can't *hear* a paradiddle, even in a drum solo. Everything has got to be very open and clean. They can't hear the other stuff, and they can't see what you're doing because they're so far away. It's just a lot of effort that goes to waste, which is another reason why I have tried to become as much involved in the other aspects of the band as possible. Like I said, in heavy metal music, drumming is quite minimal—and I'm a drummer saying that! But I'm just being honest. If I weren't involved in some of the lyric writing and arrangements, I would be bored to death. I really would. You have to make adjustments and put your energy somewhere else, I think, because there's no way you can put intricate drumming into heavy metal.

RVH: People who consider Rush heavy metal talk about Neil Peart's incredible drumming, but that's not the same kind of thing, is it?

JK: No, it's not. For instance, I love what Alex Van Halen does on the Van Halen albums, but I'll tell you, I saw him twice this year on tour, and I could not tap my foot to half of it—and I'm a drummer. In a hall, that stuff just does not come off. He's a great drummer. On the albums his playing is excellent, and to watch him close up on stage is excellent. But if you're just some kid sitting out there trying to tap your foot, it's very difficult. So I think he might be stepping over a little bit too far into the fancy stuff—live, that is. There are other performance aspects of that band that carry that; I don't think he's going to make or break the band. That's another thing musicians get caught up in—that "Well-I'm-doing-my-share" type of thing. If you have 100% output from the stage, it doesn't matter who it comes from. Charlie Watts is one of my favorite drummers, but you can't deny the fact that on stage Jagger gives 75% of the output, Richards gives 20% or whatever and then Wyman, Wood and Watts pick up the tail end. There's only 100%; it has to be divided up. With some bands it works out that everybody gives 20% or 25%; for others it's a 50% to 25% split. There are different combinations. But it is very important that you figure out which percentages are being left out—especially coming *into* a band as a new member. You look around and there's 5% over here with the lyrics and there's 20% here for the drumming. You get your little package—your role—together, and that's what you put out. As long as everybody else puts their quota out too, then you have 100%. If somebody starts slipping, then you pull it up.

RVH: You mentioned the simple playing your music requires. I think that may be why new wave and heavy metal, opposite though they are in styles, have both become the haven for the very young, virtually untrained drummer. Both styles present a situation where too many chops can be a handicap—at least emotionally. The frustration for highly technical drummers is incredible: "I've got all these skills and I can't use them!"

JK: Yeah. It's hard for me to understand why people want to. I think it's an ego problem when people feel that they have to use everything they know. Like you said, many new wave and heavy metal drummers probably don't know anything else, so they're perfectly happy. Education can be a very dangerous thing in some cases like that, unless the person happens to be smart enough to know what his or her job is and how best to approach it.

"Approach" is a very important word. My favorite drummers are Charlie Watts, Andy Newmark, Ringo Starr, and Mitch Mitchell. A lot of drummers will say, "Charlie Watts ... ?! I could play that." And they could. I can play everything Charlie Watts plays and every drummer who has been playing for two years can do it, but the important thing is that *he thought of it.* And his *approach* to drumming for the Rolling Stones—no one has done. Ringo Starr is, I think, totally overlooked for the drumming he did on some of the weirdest songs like "I Am The Walrus" and all that stuff. What could you play? And then when he finally plays it you go, "God, I could do that." But *he* thought of it. "Approach" is a very, very important word in drumming. I think that people sometimes overlook that, and instead, take "ability" and "chops" or whatever word you want to pick. They don't really dig in deep. That's why I like Andy Newmark too, because he plays the simplest patterns, but the way he approaches it is very interesting to me. I think heavy metal drumming and simple-type popular music drumming is a lot harder than jazz, because you have to play simple to get a job, but there's a very thin line between *simple* and *boring.* The really good drummers can play as simple as can be, but they're not boring, and that, to me, takes a lot more work than being able to play any chop you want. When the pattern of the song is very structured and suggestive, the restrictions are very heavy; you're in a box and you've got to stay in there. But you can't sound boring. I think that is a hell of a challenge. It takes place in all simple music: disco, a lot of new wave, and heavy metal. That's why I like those drummers. I can *appreciate* someone like Billy Cobham—I think he's great and I can't even come close to doing most of the stuff he does—but I really have more respect for a drummer who has to play the snare on 2 and 4 and the bass drum on 1 and 3 and still sound interesting.

RVH: Have you played any live dates with Krokus yet?

JK: No, not yet. We'll go on tour to support the new album when it's released.

RVH: Did you tour at all with Cobra?

JK: Cobra played three days with Quiet Riot, and about five days with Nazareth, and we did quite a few outdoor things in Memphis. Not like this though.

RVH: Usually we ask, "What is your monitor setup, how do you work with your drum roadies, and do you tune your own drums?" You don't know any of that stuff yet!

JK: Nope. I've never had all that to deal with. I'm really looking forward to it.

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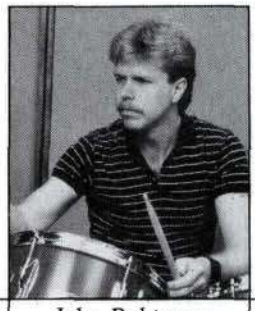
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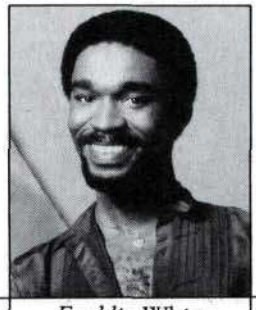
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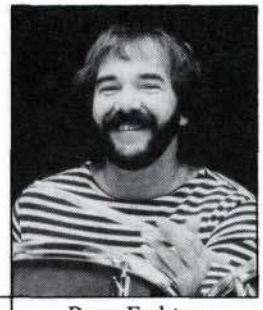
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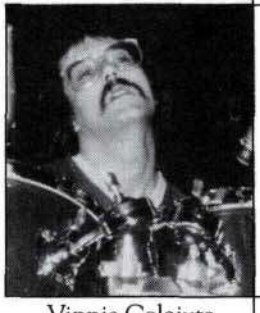
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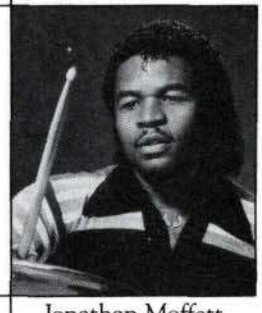
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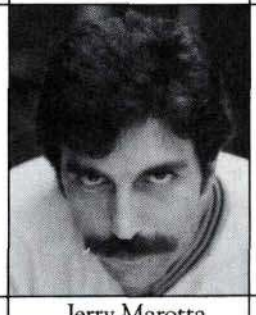
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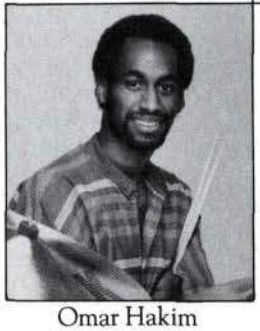
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Lewis continued from page 13

and my body.

As I went from the 26" to the 22", I didn't even notice the difference, because all I did was use the 22" more open. I put a little less muffling in it, tuned the drum, kept those heads on the looser side and everything was fine. When I got off the road and started lugging my drums around, and as cars were getting smaller, I thought I'd go to the 20". Well, it worked, and to this day I use a 20" bass drum in big bands. A 20" with proper tuning has all you need for big band.

I'm now playing Pearl drums—the Nashville Pearl, as I call them. These shells are 8-ply and are only a quarter of an inch thick. That's great. I've heard everything else and I've played on all these drums that are concentrating on thickness. I think they've all forgotten how to make drum-shells. But Al Duffy over at Pearl, who was a drum maker himself, knew what it really had to be. You need a thin shell and you need good hardware, but not hardware that stifles the drum. The Pearl setup is perfect. I used Pearl hardware with Gretsch drums for years. As far as I'm concerned, playing Pearl now is like playing the old Gretsch. I get exactly the same sound as I had before. I've gone back to using a calfskin timpani head on the batter side and calf on the front. If you really want to get that sound, you have to use calf, especially on the bass drum. On tom-toms it doesn't matter so much. I'm using calf on the tops of all my drums. I use an 8x12, a 9x 13, and a 16x 16 with the big band and I use a 6 1/2" snare drum—all maple shells. With a metal snare drum there is a metallic sound, and you have enough metal in the band as it is. All the horns are made out of metal. You need some wood in there, so you have your acoustic bass and wooden drums. A wooden snare drum sounds much better. It's a deeper, gutsier sound. I really prefer a 6 1/2" snare drum in a big band. That's what we played in the old days, and I missed it for a long time while I went to the 5 1/2". I had it tuned down. Now I can actually play a medium-tight snare drum, and with that extra inch there, I get that depth that I used to get, without having to have the drum slack.

RM: You have a deeper bass drum now too.

ML: I got this 16 x 20 and it sounds like a 26 out front. It's the same as having a 22, and if tuned right, it should sound like a 26 or 24. So I'll have to give some credit to the drums, and I'll have to give some credit to my own ears and my own touch in getting the sound.

Your drums should ring; every drum should be wide open. I don't put any muffling in the bass or the tom-toms. It's the same with the snare drum. With the bass drum, I only use a piece of paper napkin with a couple of pieces of tape to the right side of my foot pedal, and that drum has nothing inside at all. I just control it with my foot with the largest possible felt beater I can get. I have a lot of those old Ghost beaters. They're nice and big and round, and I get a big, fat sound. Of course, being a 20" it hits right in the center, so I've got everything I want. The combination is perfect.

RM: You describe your approach to big band as a small-group approach. Would you elaborate on that?

ML: Yeah, well I started off when I was very young. My first drumming was all trio—mostly piano, drums and a horn—no bass or anything like that. So I actually started out as a small-group drummer. Then, as I was listening to all these big band artists, it seemed that my favorite drummers had all come out of small groups—Dave Tough, Gene Krupa, Sid Catlett—and were adept at both. At the time I loved big band drumming, but yet it seemed to me that it was awfully ponderous. I never had a heavy foot. Maybe it was because we were playing big bass drums with no muffling. We had to really learn to

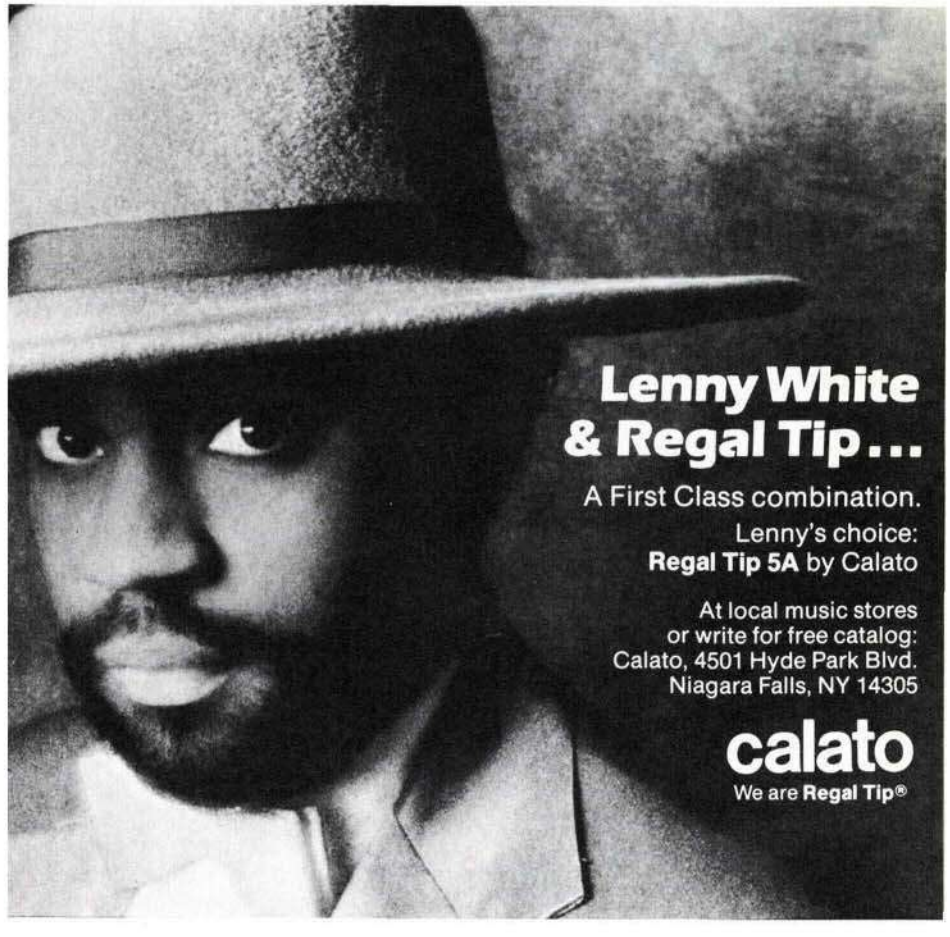
control our bass drums. Also, I started playing jazz basically in the '40s, and what was coming up at this point was bebop. I was a fan of Max Roach, Kenny Clarke, Art Blakey and so on. I was playing bebop at weddings and bar mitzvahs with society orchestras. And the leaders liked it. Of course, I had to use taste and discretion, but it worked. In Buffalo, my hometown, we were playing a lot of the standard big band arrangements—the Count Basie series, the Kenton things, and so on. I was so wrapped up in small-group bebop playing that, when I got with a big band, almost unknowingly I was throwing in a lot of offbeat stuff, and people were commenting on the motion it made. Also, I was never a loud drummer and 1 started using the ride cymbal at a point when most big band drummers were still hi-hatting it away. I was giving it the small-group approach, but I wasn't aware of what I was doing at the time.

Then I went to New York with a band by the name of Lenny Lewis. The Lenny Lewis band was a Basie-type band, but it was modern. The reason it was modern was because we were playing bebop. By that time, Dizzy Gillespie's big band was going, with drummers like Kenny Clarke, Teddy Stewart, and Joe Harris. These were bebop drummers who were playing small group and big band. They were dropping bombs all over the place, but they were still basically playing big band drums. There were a lot more offbeats going on—not as much as I was doing, but a lot. So it was being accepted in a little way. Most of the bands were still straight ahead, heavy 4/4, backbeats, hi-hats and just pretty much clumping away, with the idea being to swing. There wasn't too much in the way of fills; you had to wait for your drum solo, which you did every night. Keeping time was the most important thing because they were dance bands. When I went with Ray Anthony's band, he started jumping all over me because I was playing loose, modern, small-group style drumming. He liked it, but he didn't want me to do it. "Play time. I want 4/4. 1 don't want anything else." So, naturally, he and I didn't see eye to eye. I stayed there a long time and we are very good friends today. We can look back now and laugh at that, but back then he insisted that I play heavy time. When I listen to those old records that I made with him, they sound pretty darn good. Every once in a while, I stuck something in, even though I got a glare.

When I went with the Tex Beneke/Glenn Miller orchestra, we had a rhythm section that contained myself and Buddy Clark, who was a good modern bassist. By this time, there were a lot of bebop players in the band. Tex had a very open mind and his bit was, "If you want to play bebop in the band, I like it, but use discretion and do it where it will work." So when we played these more modern arrangements, I was allowed to play bebop drums. Then, when I joined the Kenton band, I had my chance. I was kicking all over the place and playing exactly the same way that I played with a small group. We came to New York and played our first concert at Carnegie Hall. It was the first time the band was going to be reviewed by the New York critics for *downbeat* and *Metronome* and all the magazines then. One of the first reviews that came out said that "not only is the Kenton band swinging, but the new young drummer, Mel Lewis, brings a whole new small-group approach to the feeling of the band." That was the first time I became aware myself that I had actually created a new thing, although I think Tiny Kahn was doing that type of thing back in the '40s too. There were a certain amount of modern drummers who could play with a big band that were doing that. But I think I went beyond what they were doing, because I used more left hand, and I started playing lighter. I think that's the key to the whole idea of a small-group approach. It gives the band more momentum and makes them play in a more flowing way. They get away from that heavy four feeling that most big bands have. Anyway, it worked for the Kenton band. I got a lot of the credit for lightening the band up. If you play just about the way you would play loudly in a small group, and the band is aware of what you are doing, they'll come down in their volume and the whole thing will swing more. The whole range of dynamics drops down; the softs are really soft, the mediums are really medium, the louds are loud and the real louds are not too loud. Normally it's either loud or louder, and no band is going to swing when it's real loud. It just gets ponderous. But this small-group approach keeps it flowing along, and it's so much easier to work with dynamics that way.

RM: The typical words people use to describe big band drumming are real aggressive words like drive, kick, push.

ML: Yeah, but the real word is not drive or kick; it's intensity, and intensity can be real soft. The whole thing is motion. I believe in always having some kind of motion, unless you're playing a real slow ballad with brushes. Then there's nothing more difficult to do than to space those quarter notes. Elvin Jones is a master at that. You really have to have that nice, wide triplet in your head. If you have a good, even triplet going in your body, you can play a slow four with a mile of space in between each beat. That sounds beautiful, but it's difficult to do. Most drummers have a tendency to go to double time as soon as it gets too slow. Well, man, that's cheating. If you can really stretch it so that it lays right where it's supposed to be, it is a marvelous sound and it swings. No matter how slow it is, it swings. The sound of space with just that swish of the brush before the next beat hits, with the hi-hat



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hitting right on the bottom of 2 and right on the bottom of 4—that will swing. When it's right, the swing is there.

RM: You still do more small-group playing than I think a lot of people realize. You just talked about what you got from small groups and took to big bands. How does that work in reverse? What do you think the big band playing has given you that you've taken back to the small groups?

ML: Ensemble playing, because in a big band you really have to use your ears a lot. In a small group, the tendency is just to play. A lot of drummers in small groups don't listen to what's going on around them. I can almost anticipate where a soloist is going to go. It also helps the ensemble playing with the piano and the bass. If you want to play some riffs or get some ensemble backgrounds going, the big band experience pays off for that. Also, the shading and dynamics in a small group are just as important as in a big band. Learning to play the hi-hat on the first chorus, playing the bridge on a ride cymbal and then going back to the hi-hat—that's ensemble playing, and I think that comes out of my big band experience.

Of course they say that you're freer in a small group. Well, I'm just as free in a big band behind a soloist. It's the same thing. A big band is only a big band while the whole band is playing. When a soloist stands up to blow, that's a quartet now. So you're using both anyway. The approach of send-offs, riffs and little things behind the soloist comes from big band. That makes the small-group sound a little more dynamic. You use a little more energy that way and I still believe in the dynamic thing—the principle of when the soloist starts, you don't come on like gangbusters. You start easy and build it up. That's where your big band experience comes in.

RM: In the last year or two, you've played in a variety of situations. What are the different requirements of playing all these things? What's the same? How do we know it's always you?

ML: The last two or three years have been very interesting for me. Since 1 took over the sole leadership of the band after Thad left, the style of the band started to change—not actually change, but musically we started expanding. I had to start becoming more of a percussionist again. As this all happened, I also had to make a living so I had to take other jobs too. People should understand that with a big band such as I have, which is an artistic type of orchestra, we can't be working every day. Although we do play dances, and we do play concerts, and we do play at the Village Vanguard and other clubs, those kinds of jobs are just not out there daily, and we're not a road band *per se,* although we make tours around the world. So I have to make my living in other ways. I did a tour of Europe with Benny Goodman, and some concerts here in the States. As usual, working for a guy like him is very demanding. He's very tough on drummers. He doesn't tell you how to play, but he bothers you. You have to know how to ignore him, which I'm very good at, because, first of all, I'm not afraid of him, and second of all, I don't need him. He needed me. That's my attitude. When you call me, you need me. That's why you called me.

Now, when you go in a band like that, you have to realize it's Benny Goodman, it's 1930s, and you've got to get back into that groove. So I have to put on my 1935 or 1936 head and find that groove, which means a little heavier on the 4/4, a lot simpler playing, time is of the essence, and I use a lot more hi-hat. So I take a small snare drum, and I use my 13" hi-hats, which are much easier to get that old sound on, smaller cymbals all the way around, and only one tom-tom for the "Sing, Sing, Sing" thing, because for the rest of it it's not even necessary. Backbeats are important, and straight ahead 4/4 style brushes—not too much of anything else. You get into that tradition.

I've also been doing a lot of trio work with different people, and I've been doing some extremely modern avant-garde things with Bob Brookmeyer—small group and chamber-size groups and a symphony, where I had to be a total percussionist. Playing with a symphony is like playing with Cecil Taylor. It's that kind of a situation. Incidentally, the band is going to be doing something very shortly with Cecil Taylor, and I will be doing a duet with him, as he did with Max Roach not too long ago. I want to do things like that because it's a challenge, it's fun, and it's musically important.

RM: I heard the record that Cecil and Max did, and my only complaint was that it was basically Max meeting Cecil on Cecil's territory. I'd like to hear Cecil do some of Max's stuff. What's your situation going to be?

ML: Well, with us I think it will be more like that, because Cecil comes to hear the band a lot. He knows my playing and we've already discussed that there will be a meeting of both of us. Besides, I'm that way anyway. I'll go his way when I feel that he's carrying the ball, but then I'll take the ball myself, because I'm so used to doing that. So I think that's going to work out. We spend many a Monday night after hours at the Vanguard talking about music, and I don't think we'll have any problems.

Another thing I'm doing is working with a guy named Lome Schoenberg who has a band. He uses the old arrangements from the '20s, '30s and '40s. Then I put on my Gene Krupa and Jo Jones hat. We play a lot of Buck Clayton's arrangements from the early Basie days and early Benny Goodman. That music will only sound good if you play it the way it was originally done. You cannot play today's style with

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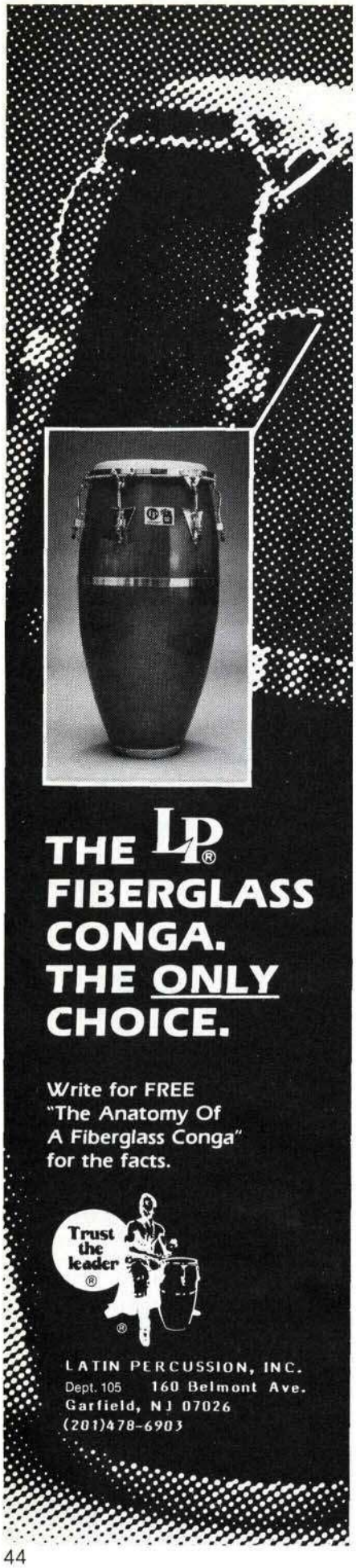

that music. That's why I encourage young drummers to listen to those things and get into the history. Those records are all available. Listen to it because when you're called upon to do it, you should be able to. You don't have to have been born then. Just absorb it and listen to what it is. I think you'll have fun trying to do it, because when you do it right, that music comes off great.

In the last few years, the biggest thing I've been doing is going over to Europe and appearing with different radio bands. They're hiring me to be a "featured sideman," shall we say, but I'm listed as the guest of honor and I'm paid as a guest of honor. I have to try to play with these different style musicians. Every band has a different direction and all their leaders have different ideas. Of course, when I get there they say, "Alright, you've got it. You tell us what to do." Usually what I try to do is say, "Well, let's do what you want to do, and try to make that better." So I try to be Mel Lewis in those situations—be myself, but at the same time, don't go too far beyond where they are. I go to Cologne a lot—twice a year with Bill Holman and twice a year with Bob Brookmeyer. With Brookmeyer, we're into that more modern thing, and with Holman, it's more swinging and straight ahead. I can be myself in both cases, but in each case I've got to work hard to mold these musicians to make them sound like, say, Bill Holman's band. Then if I go up to Helsinki, that's another kind of band. The Fins have a different feeling than the Swedes, and the Swedes feel different than the Germans. It has a lot to do with their environment and their education in music. Some of them are a little stiffer than others. So I have to either make myself fit or make them fit me. In other words, one of us is the sock and the other is the shoe. We try to make it work together on a neutral foot. This is not easy, because in many cases, they know their music and I'm sight-reading, but I do it pretty quickly. I'll have 20 minutes or half an hour to learn three or four pieces to do a program with, and I have to learn that right away. But it always works. And these are different size big bands. Some are 16 piece, some are 20, some are 25, and so on. Then while I'm over there, I do some quartet or quintet things.

Then I come back home and I'll still play some club dates. I'll play wedding jobs with players I like to play with, where we basically can swing. But even though we're swinging, there are people dancing. Again, you have to think in terms of them. You can't play bebop while people are trying to dance. I'm playing a wedding this Sunday, using four guys from the band. We're going to be playing jazz but we'll be playing for dancers. So I'll keep all the tempos danceable, and I won't get too funny with the offbeats, and we'll play swinging dance music for them, because that's what they want and that's what we're going to do. But it's still important if somebody does come up and ask for a samba or merengue or a tango or a waltz that we can do it in the club-date tradition.

RM: Or "Hava Nagila" or "The Hokey Pokey."

ML: Yeah. That's going to come up and we're going to do it. I know how to do all those things. I learned them in my youth. I've been a jazz player all my life, but all the time I was a jazz player, I made a living working in studio orchestras and playing weddings and bar mitzvahs. I played all kinds of weddings—Polish, Greek, Italian—where I had to learn all the different ethnic musics, and I think most jazz musicians did. Every drop of it is good experience. It really makes you a better drummer all the way around and it certainly does not hurt your jazz. The only thing that can hurt your jazz is staying away from it, not listening to it, and not really getting into it. You have to look back into the history of the music, and find out what preceded the stars of today. Today's drummers are not the people who set this thing up. They are not the people who created it, and you're never really going to learn from them what you have to know. You have to go back to the masters.

RM: For someone who's used to listening to modern records, when you go out and buy records by people like Chick Webb and Baby Dodds, a lot of times it's not real obvious just what it was that they had. You're not going to hear pyrotechnics and you're not going to hear very good drum sounds. Sometimes you're lucky if you can even hear the drums at all. Can you give any hints to somebody who goes out and buys some of these records? What should they be listening for?

ML: What you really should be listening for is the time feeling that they got, the way they supported the band, and the dynamics that they used. Everybody played dynamics in those days, mainly because those were all direct-to-disc recordings. It was monaural recording right onto the track, so all dynamics were created by the musicians themselves. And in those days, the drums weren't muffled, so you really had to have control. So listen for the control that the drummers had—the way they used their hi-hats, the way they played press rolls on snare drums, the evenness of the time, the little things they played in between. Also, when you listen to them, you should realize that these drummers were creating this. There really wasn't anybody who came before them that they could listen to. So you're listening to the creators of the tradition. Listen to Jo Jones in the '30s, or Chick Webb. Then listen to Gene Krupa, and you'll say, "Ah, Krupa sounds a little bit like Chick Webb." Right. You'll notice that Chick Webb sounds a little like Baby Dodds. Correct. You'll also notice that early

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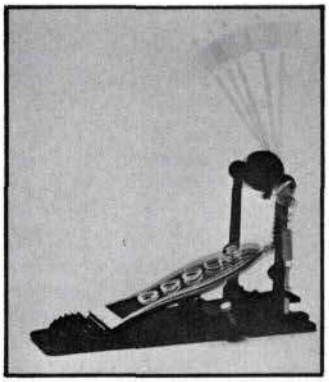

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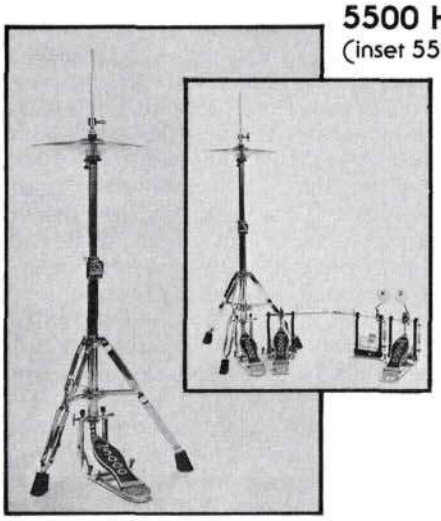

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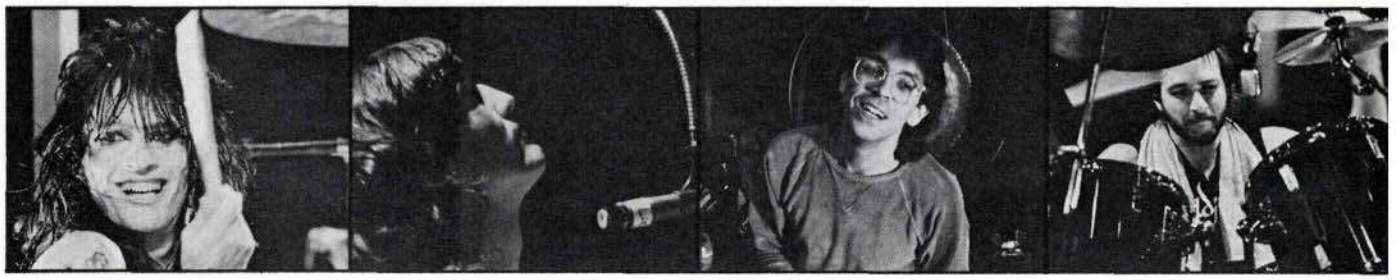

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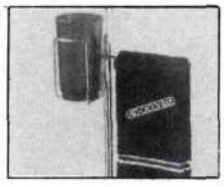

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Buddy Rich sounds a little bit like all of them. Keep moving up, and you'll find that we all still sound like them, to a point. That's where we learned. That's the whole idea of tradition—where certain elements are retained all the way up to today. We're still playing, "ding, ding-a-ding." We're still keeping time—boom, boom, boom—and we still play backbeats. This is what you listen for. Then, when you listen to all the little frills and all the modern drumming that you hear today, you'll say, "Yeah, I see where that came from."

I don't think any of us could do today what we're doing without that tradition. In most of the young modern drummers coming up now there's a lot lacking, because they haven't studied their history. They started with today's top. You cannot do that, because you won't understand it. If you really want to be good, do some research. You'll find that starting with Jo Jones will make you a much better drummer than starting with Elvin Jones, because Elvin is so much more complex. Elvin started with Jo Jones, so that's how you should do it. You're not going to be as good as Elvin at all, unless you understand where Elvin came from. He knows where he came from. But if you're starting with him, you've lost 20 years or more of tradition and history, and you're not going to make it. That's why I talk about tradition a lot.

RM: When you're drawing from a lot of different people—the old masters—how do you develop your own identity, as opposed to just imitating what's come before you?

ML: When you hear somebody that you really like a lot and who really becomes a strong influence on you, there's a danger there of course, because if you're into any one drummer too much, you will start copying. All you're going to be is a poor imitation. So I generally say, don't ever get hung up on one person. Always keep your mind open and listen to a lot of people. There will always be two, three or four people who will be the heaviest influences on your life. That's the way it was with me. However, one of the best ways to discover yourself is to listen to yourself. Today it's very simple being that we all have access to cassettes and you can record yourself anytime. So instead of sitting home and listening all day to your favorite drummer, spend more time listening to cassettes of yourself. In the beginning, you'll hear things you don't like. Great. Eliminate those things or make them better. You will hear things you do like. Keep those and improve upon them. After a while, by listening to yourself and believing in yourself, you will start to influence yourself. It's the same thing as listening to somebody else too much. You will be influenced by that person. So listen to yourself and you will eventually influence yourself. You will hear your sound or you will hear yourself changing, and before you know it, you will have developed a style of your own. The whole idea is to find yourself, get your own sound, your own feeling, your own ideas, and your own little cliches. Even if some of them are things you've heard other people do, by listening to yourself you'll turn so-and-so's idea into your idea. Don't play it the way someone else played it. Add something to it. Change it a little bit. Find your own thing. By listening to yourself a lot, you do become an influence on yourself. Then, of course, once you've found yourself, you can start listening to your favorites again, because by this time, you will be so confident in your own thing that they won't be able to influence you anymore.

RM: Let's talk a little about the evolution of your band. The *Make Me Smile* album was a very orchestral, concert, almost classical-type approach. You've told me that your next album is going to be all standards. Does that represent a change in directions or is that just a different side of the same group?

ML: No, it's not going to be a change in direction at all. It's going to be basically a continuation of what I wanted this band to be in the first place. I've always wanted the band to be a band of many faces, but with one concept. In other words, when you hear this band, you know it's this band. It has a sound and a feel of its own. But I want the band to be able to play in the traditional way; I want it to be able to play hot bebop arrangements, like for the jazz-club circuit; I want it to be able to go into a Carnegie Hall type of place and play orchestral jazz music; and I want it to be able to go into a dance hall and play dance music with the same quality—that same orchestral feeling, except with the power of a dance beat and with the fire and creativity of playing the bebop stuff in a club. So in other words, it's all jazz and it's this band's personality along with my own personality going in all the directions that I can take my particular style. My style is very recognizable, but it's flexible. When I play Dixieland, you still know it's me playing Dixieland. When I'm playing orchestral music, you'll know that it's Mel. You'll know it's Mel playing dance music and you'll know it's Mel playing bebop. You'll also know it's Mel Lewis' Jazz Orchestra playing that music—not just me. If Joey Baron is subbing for me—which he does once in a while when I have to go to Europe—you'll still recognize that band. The quality, the sound, and the feeling will work in any capacity.

In the 19-year history of the band, we've mostly done original material. I think that's been a little mistake on our part. I want to reach that audience who looks for tunes they recognize. I want to be able to have them hear things that they know, without sacrificing one inch of quality and the sound of this band. It will be that

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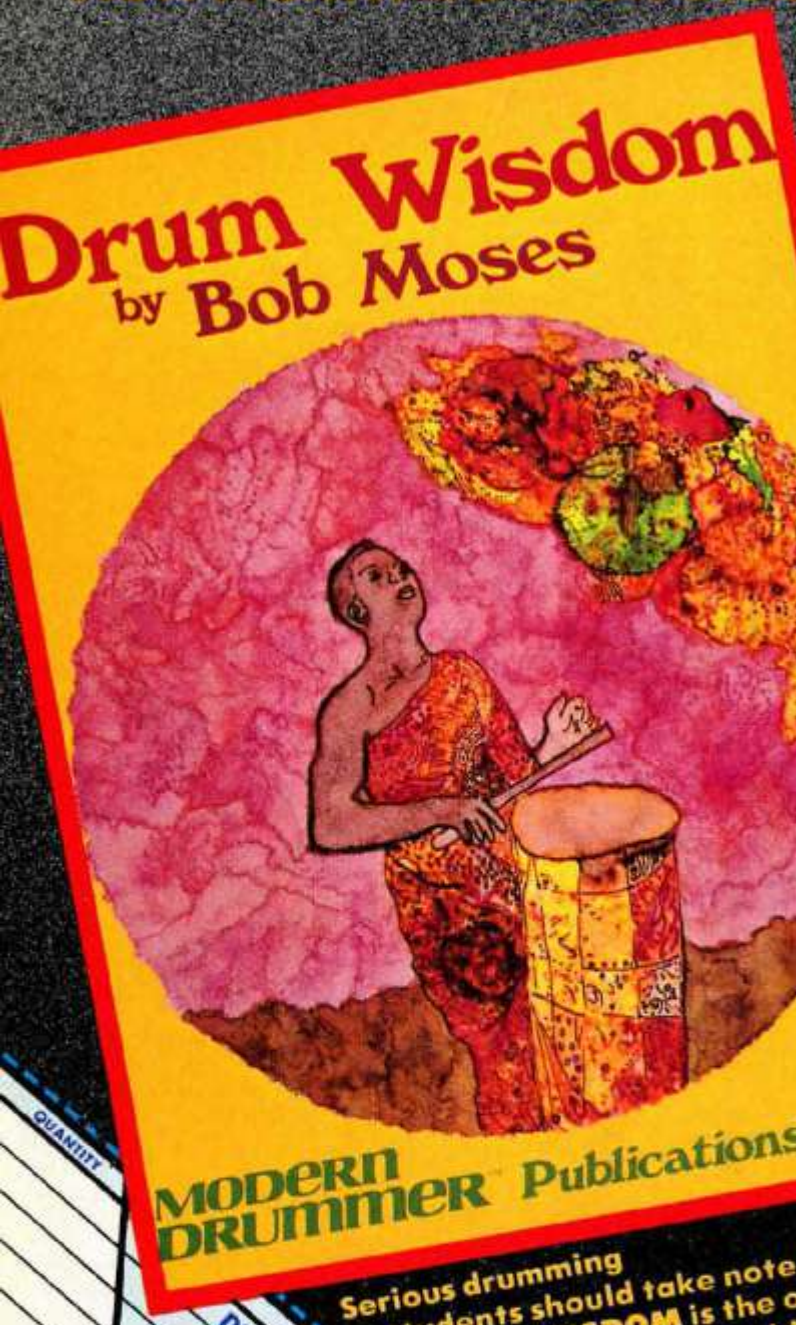

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sound with a more solid beat—a less fooling around type of thing. I'll go for swinging more with as much intensity as possible, because that's what makes people dance—makes them want to snap their fingers to a tune they know—and yet the sound reaching their ears is just as rich, full and pleasant sounding as *Make Me Smile* is to sit down and listen to, or to hear the band play in a concert. I know it can be done and that's why I want to do that. That will establish us with a new audience, also. Besides, I think if people had the chance to dance to big bands, they would find out it's a great experience. The people can participate in what the band is doing. I think it would be a very healthy thing, and for the musicians on the bandstand, it's a wonderful feeling watching people dance to your music. It's inspiring, especially when they dance in time. If they do dance in time, it's basically because you're laying down something very strong for them.

RM: A lot of jazz musicians, though, seem to have an attitude about playing for a dance.

ML: Well, it's a bad attitude. Playing for dancing is satisfying. To do that, you have to swing, and swinging is what jazz is about. I also like the challenge of playing a Bob Brookmeyer composition to an audience in a concert hall. You're reaching a very selective, critical audience. People who really know music are sitting out in that audience and you're putting on a performance of the highest order. Playing to a dance crowd is another mentality. You're trying to satisfy people who like to dance. But at the same time, at least half of them are also listeners. They love jazz and they love big bands. You have to satisfy their ears while you're satisfying their feet—their bodies that won't sit still in a concert hall. They're just not into that heavy thing.

Jazz has a small enough audience as it is, but by playing jazz for dancing you can reach a bigger audience if you work it right. That's where the standard tunes come in. When they hear a familiar tune, that's all they care about. They don't care about how it's surrounded harmonically. They just want to hear a tune they know and feel a beat they can dance to. That gets them on the floor. The other people—who would also come to hear you in a concert hall, and who also have feet that want to move—hear that tune, and also hear the colors in the music. So now they're hearing the kind of jazz they like to listen to, and they can also move their feet. They don't have to sit in a chair in a smoky nightclub to hear it. Then you have that other audience, of course, that *likes* to sit in a smoky nightclub and just sit on top of the band and hear great jazz soloists. They don't care what the melody is because they just want to hear jazz improvisation. So you can lay all the original stuff on them and they'll love it.

RM: Technically, how do you combine a dance approach with your bebop approach?

ML: I think more in terms of the time. I'll get a touch heavier on the 4/4 with my foot. In my case, that's not a lot because I have such a light touch. So when I add a little more to it, it's still not going to take over, but it's going to be a firmer beat. I still throw in an occasional offbeat, but if your bass drum is playing offbeats all the time, it's going to confuse the dancers, and actually you're not going to get that feel you're striving for. I like playing backbeats too, and the shuffle rhythm. It's fun playing time. I just make up my mind that I'm not going to sit up here to show off how great I can play, but how danceable I can play. It's just as enjoyable as the other thing, because the swing is still the most important thing.

RM: When I was learning to play, I didn't live in a place like New York where I could actually hear the drummers live, so everything was coming off records. The way the albums were recorded, the only bass drum I heard was the accents. I didn't realize how much straight 4/4 was actually being played on the bass drum.

ML: That's right. When I started recording in '49, they only used one mic' on the drums, and that was up above. All those drummers were playing in four, but because they were playing a light four and then hitting accents, the light four was not being picked up. Even to this day, if you don't mike the bass drum, the light four won't be picked up.

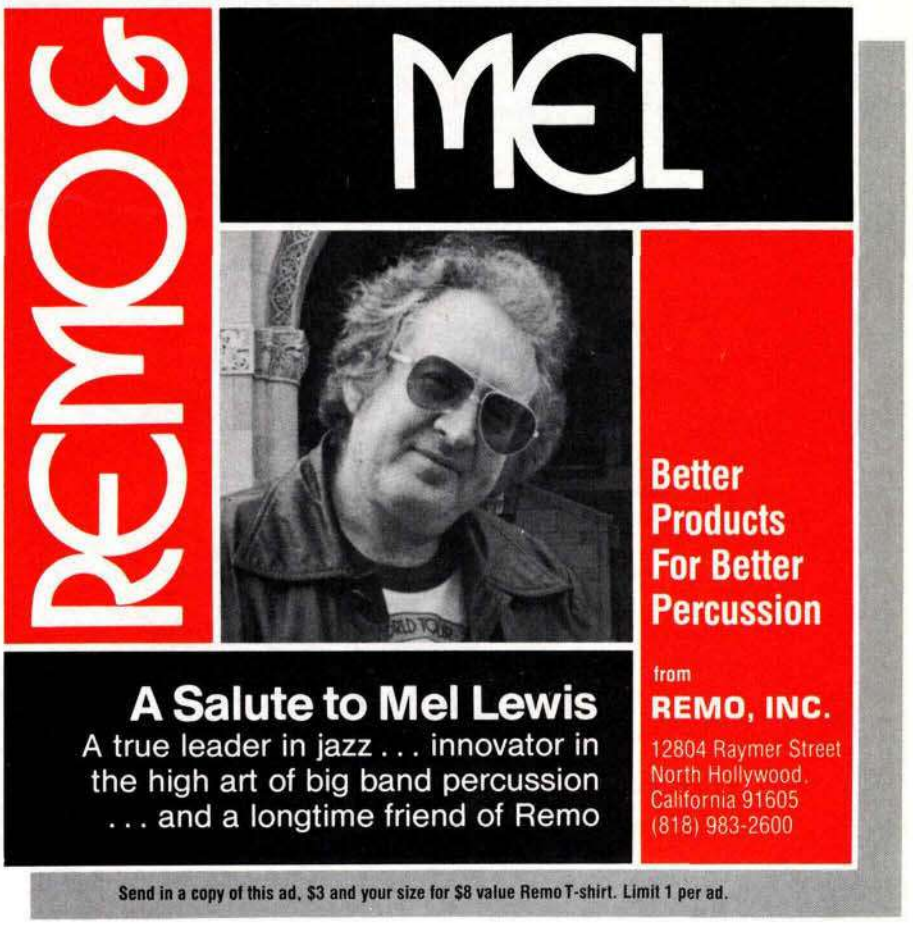
The great way to mike drums is with ambience-style miking, where there are a couple of mic's around the drums. This business of putting a mic' on every drum makes no sense at all. In fact, 1 get a little depressed. If all these drummers today who are doing all this recording would really sit down and think about it, they should be depressed too, actually, because they rave about their engineers. "Oh, I leave everything up to my engineer." In the meantime, you don't know anything. What if it was left up to you? You wouldn't know what to do. When I go into a studio and they lay all these microphones on me, I say, "Hey, get that stuff away. I don't want it." They say, "Well, let's try it." I say, "I don't want them there, man. Get them away. Just put two mic's over the drums. I don't want one on the bass drum. When 1 want it to be heard, it will be heard." It sounds just like I want it to, because it's me—not the engineer. Rock drumming, I think, would sound a hell of a lot better if the drums were open.

RM: Did you happen to read the John Bonham article?

ML: Yeah, I read it.

RM: There's a guy whose sound all the rock drummers are trying to imitate and it came out that he did exactly what you're talking about.

ML: Right, because he was smart. If drum-



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mers only realized that they should be running the show—not the engineer—you could listen and really recognize the different drummers, because they would be getting their own sound.

We all got our own sound. It wasn't just the style; it was the sound. But with rock drumming, everybody sounds alike, because the engineers are making every drummer get that same sound, no matter who it is. So if a drummer does have a little bit of style, it's hard to pick up because it comes out sounding like some other drummer who was in the studio an hour ago. An engineer will do six sessions in one day, with six different drummers, and they'll all end up sounding the same because that's the only sound that engineer knows. Man, a great engineer should be able to reproduce what *you* want—get six different sounds for six different drummers. I don't even want to know an engineer who can't do that. If you can't get my sound, then you're not a great engineer.

RM: Speaking of sounds, the album you did on Telarc, *Naturally*—now there's a sound!

ML: That's exactly what I'm talking about. That's the way to record. Actually, although *Make Me Smile* was not as strong because it wasn't done digitally, it was still the same principle. *Make Me Smile* was done with two mic's hanging from the center of the Village Vanguard. With the Telarc record, they only used three microphones in front of the band. No mic's were on anybody and my drums sound absolutely marvelous. Some of the members of the band were not thrilled. They didn't think that their parts came through and so on, but that was their fault for not moving in a little bit, not playing a little stronger, or not blending in a little bit more. In other words, it was our own inexperience with digital recording. But that's the way to record—absolutely natural. I'm glad they even titled it *Naturally,* because it really was, and I'd like to record that way again. That gave me the idea to record the next couple of albums in a similar way. We did and it works fine. On *Make Me Smile,* I'm 30 feet from those microphones, but you can still hear my brush work. On the digital record the brush work is even more beautiful.

So I don't understand this situation with layering and booths and all this other crap that the engineers have come up with. The drummers are going to have to wake up and say, "I am the drummer. This is my career you're messing with."

A lot of drummers will say, when I tell them about how they should control their own sound in the studio, "Yeah, well you're Mel Lewis. You can get away with all that." But I was telling engineers what I wanted when I was a total nobody—when I was a young kid. My first date was Ray Anthony's band. I walked in and I found the drums to be about 30 feet away from the band. I couldn't believe it. The engineer said, "Well, you drummers play so loud." So when we started playing, I played real soft. The band couldn't hear me and they kept yelling, "We can't hear the drums." I kept playing as soft as possible, and they kept moving me closer, until before you knew it I was right in the band. Then I played normal—not too loud. Right then and there, I developed a technique of not playing too loud, and it came through fine on the record. The engineer said, "Hey, it's alright." I found that, when 1 was a studio player out in L. A. and then later on in New York back in the late '50s and all through the '60s, all the engineers loved when I showed up. They all told me the same thing: "Man, it's a pleasure to record you." I never had to say anything to them. They would open up the pot, I would play at a reasonable level—never get too loud—and everything I did would come through beautifully.

Then, times changed. Younger engineers were coming up and I played some rock in the early days too. Most people don't know that I was the drummer on "Alley Oop." When we got into that kind of thing, the engineers started this routine of stuffing the drums. In New York, every studio seemed to have a wonderful bass drum. All of a sudden, the front heads were gone, all these blankets were going in there, and they were shoving mic's into the drums. New engineers were coming on and tight miking was starting. I started telling them, "Hey, get that away from me, man. I don't want it." They'd say, "Well, that's what we want." But I'd tell them, "You're going to get my sound the way I want it, or you're no engineer and I'm leaving." Now if enough drummers would just take that attitude—quit worrying about the money and start thinking about their futures—they would find that they could get more respect in the long run, and we would start hearing records where we could really say, "I know that drummer" without reading the label to find out who it is.

Now they have these machines, and I warned everybody about that at one time. If you could see some of the contracts up at the union right now, you would find out that half the jingles and half the record dates coming out are being done by one person with a synthesizer and a *LinnDrum* machine. As far as I'm concerned, the *LinnDrum* company should be blown up. I think it's a terrible mistake that rock drummers have been made to use these machines or have been talked into it, because they're being wiped out slowly. Some people will say that I'm nuts or that I'm full of crap, but they'll see.

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After speaking to Ed Thigpen and listening to the accompanying cassette tape, I've come to the conclusion that this book, »The Sound of Brushes«, is an essential element in everyone's educational library. Put it in the section marked »Percussion, Traps, Contemporary«. Try it! You'll like it! *Billy Cobham*

I would like to endorse your book and feel that it is a great teaching aid I would use for students. Brushes are totally ignored by so many young drummers today that I feel your book is even more valuable and should be exposed. Good luck with it and I hope it's a »hit«! *Harvey Mason*

Ed Thigpens »Sound of Brushes« book is a must for every serious drummer who wants to become a well rounded musician in the music bussiness. *Jack De Johnette*

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Send M.O. or Check in U.S. $ 12,95 + 2,00 postage for The Sound of Brushes and $ 4,95 + 1,00 postage for Rhythm Analysis and Basic Co-ordination to Donald Meade/Action-Reaction U.S.A. 617 East 83rd St., Chicago, ILL. 60619.

RM: When we were talking about all the different situations you play in, you made the comment that you never go too far out. You're always Mel Lewis. Who is Mel Lewis as you see him?

ML: Well, Mel Lewis, I guess, is a guy who has never known anything in his life except drums and music. I admit I am very opinionated and I really can't stand people who are mediocre. I can't even be friends with them. So that might be one of the harshest parts of me, but basically I'm a lover of humanity, and above all, music. 1 love music and I can't see myself doing anything else in this life except playing music. Now, I won't say there's no music that 1 don't like, because my taste in music is pretty well known. I really do not like today's commercial pop music. To me, it's not artistic enough. It's meaningless. It's to make money with. I think it's a waste of good talents. There are too many talents going down the drain, and I refuse to be a part of it. I won't say I didn't do a few little things in my life where I showed up on a date and was sorry I was there, but I was hired and so I did my job. However, I swore that I would never do it again, and I didn't. I think Mel Lewis is a person who has made up his mind pretty much that there is going to be great music in this world for as long as there is life, and in his time, he is going to do everything that he can to perpetuate it, even at the cost of the good life.

In having a band of the kind that I have, probably the most important thing to me is that I can actually utilize everything that I have ever learned—any kind of music, from society music, to Dixieland, to show music, to burlesque music, to classical music, to all different ethnic musics. I can use those things any way I want to at any time in this orchestra of mine. I'm probably freer than any other drummer in the world, because we're a small group, we're a big band, and we've played all kinds of music for everybody and can fit into any kind of situation. Also, my solo opportunities are endless. I don't have to cater to the masses. I can go in any direction I want and I usually do. I don't think many other musicians have that freedom, because they haven't created that for themselves. Even the drummer/bandleaders have bands that are built around what they do best. Mine isn't built around what I do best. Mine is built around what we want to do at any given time. So it's a totally flexible thing. If I never played with another band for the rest of my life, I would never get tired of this. I still like to play with other people, but this is the main thing in my life. I think I'm in a very, very unique position at this point in my life, and it doesn't ever have to change. That's a point that nobody ever asked me before: "Are you satisfied with your life?" Yes, I am. Of course, there's always more to learn, but I am basically very, very happy.

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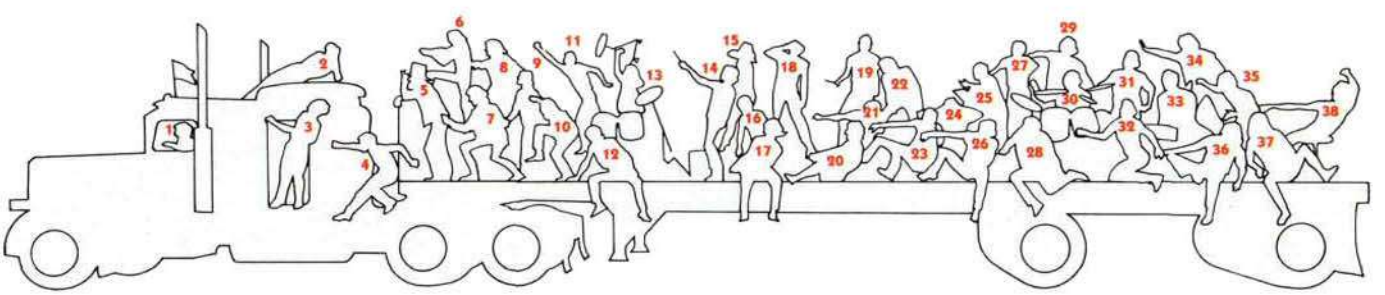

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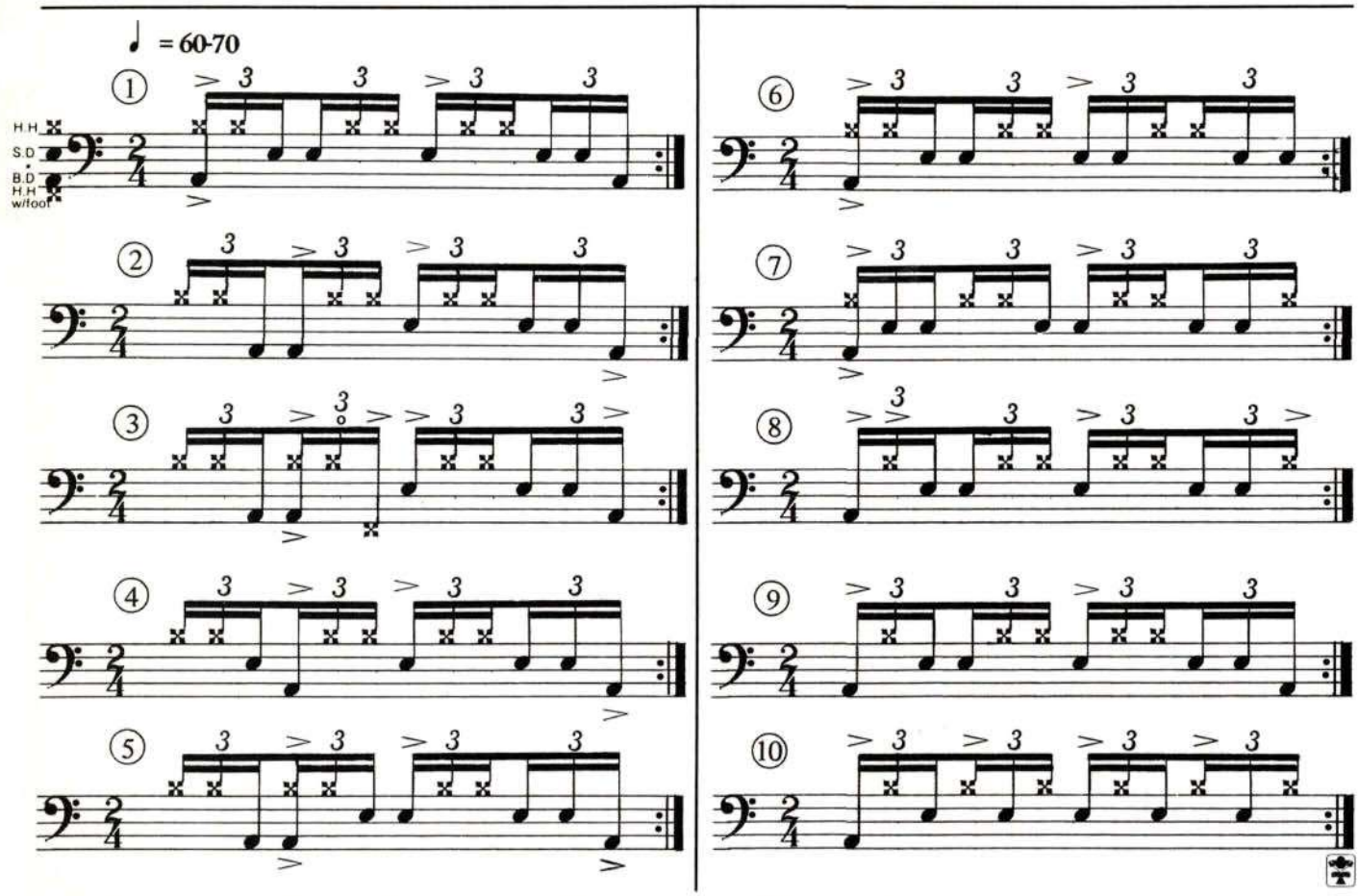

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by Rick Van Horn

Studying The Competition

Last time, I discussed the value of studying your own playing, and the musical, educational and historical benefits to be gained from such study. It goes without saying that there is also a tremendous amount to be gained from studying the work of all the top drummers in the business, in terms of feel, technique, and general musical ideas. But let's not forget a basic rule of business which applies as much to club performing as it does to selling shoes: You've got to know what the competition is doing!

I don't mean this in a cutthroat sense, but rather in a spirit of personal education. It's important to study those players who are performing in the same level of the business as you are, so that you can evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and perhaps pick up some useful ideas that might serve to improve your own performance. After all, your competition is made up of players who are doing what you are doing; therefore, what they do has the greatest relevance to your own playing.

Let's face it, there are certain aspects of the club scene that apply equally to almost every group. There is a phenomenon that occurs in almost any community where live entertainment is prevalent, and that phenomenon is called a "circuit." This simply refers to a group of clubs, situated in the same general vicinity, that have a tendency to hire bands from the surrounding area. What generally happens is that a group of bands will work such a circuit in rotation, playing a few weeks at each club in succession. Quite often the people who frequent these clubs will see and hear each band on the circuit several times within a very short period of time, offering an excellent (and, in fact, inescapable) opportunity for direct comparison. And since the clubs on a given circuit tend to attract a similar clientele, that means that the music played in all the clubs is likely to be very similar, which in turn means that the bands are very likely to appear similar as well—some might say interchangeable.

The problem faced by the ambitious club band, then, is how to meet the demands of the circuit, in terms of the songs the audience wants to hear, and still retain an individual quality that makes that particular band stand out over the others appearing on the same circuit. In other words, how does a given band maintain an edge over their competition?

If you're playing top-40 music, that pretty much means that you're playing the same tunes that every other band on your circuit is playing, give or take a few select oldies. You can't avoid it; there's only one top-40.If you try to keep current with your material, your selection is dictated by what's on the radio surveys. So the quality of your repertoire is not determined as much by *what* you play as by *how* you play it.

Finding out how other club drummers perform the material that you are also performing is the "studying" I'm referring to in the title of this article. It's important to objectively evaluate a drummer's performance musically, so that you can determine what makes that performance good or bad. I recently had occasion to listen to two club bands on the same evening. They were working in neighboring clubs on the same circuit, and had many similarities. Both were five-piece groups featuring guitar, bass, keyboards, drums and a stand-up vocalist; both had excellent equipment; both were attractively dressed and appeared comfortable in their surroundings. The most striking similarity was in their musical repertoire: In listening to about a set and a half from each band, I heard at least a dozen songs that were performed by both. Yet I found one band extremely entertaining, while the other struck me as much less so. What made the difference, given all the similarities I've outlined?

I've already written several columns about nonmusical methods that a drummer may employ to increase his or her potential as an entertainer. Showmanship, enthusiasm, visibility and visual appeal all combine to enhance a drummer's performance. But a drummer is, first and foremost, a musician, and it is the *musical* aspect of a drummer's performance that makes his or her greatest contribution—be it a positive or negative one—to the overall quality of a band's music.

Drummers on long-term club gigs have a tendency to become complacent, and that complacency often tends to translate as sloppiness where technique is concerned, and what is even more noticeable, laziness where innovative arrangement is concerned. In the side-by-side band comparison I mentioned earlier, the outstanding feature of the band I enjoyed—and especially of that band's drummer—was precise execution of parts, and the tasteful use of dynamics. The drummer did not overplay, yet what he did play was clean, well-executed, and musically interesting. Conversely, the drummer in the band I did not enjoy played in a very monotonous (and I mean that quite literally—mono-tone) manner, keeping good time but showing very little imagination with accents or fills. What fills he did play were done without "snap"; they didn't stand out because his dynamic level never really changed.

Let's discuss a few playing techniques and musical considerations that you should listen for when studying your competition. If you hear them being played by another drummer, note how they contribute to the music's appeal. If you don't hear them, note how their absence is felt.

1. *Dynamics.* This is the single most important element that separates a musical club drummer—or any drummer—from a nonmusical one. You should listen to whether the drummer achieves a proper balance behind vocalists and soloists. Does the drummer use volume to get attention—to make a musical statement—or as a way of life? Accents should be clearly defined, and louder enough than the balance of the drumming to differentiate them from the time playing. On the other hand, the standard backbeat should not be an accent; there needs to be "headroom" for slightly louder playing when fills or accents are called for. Listen, too, for the drummer's use of low-volume dynamics. A statement can be made just as effectively by a sudden *drop* in volume as by a sudden increase. See if the drummer can play a dinner set without sounding boring or stifled by the imposed reduction of volume.

2. *Arrangements and taste.* You should note how well the drummer plays solid time when it's called for, but also how punches and accents are used to spice things up. Does the drummer employ fills only to take up space, or do they actually mean something to the music? Listen for dynamic buildups and introductions to instrumental leads or vocal sections. See how the drummer works in a ballad to enhance the dramatic quality. A nice trick that's used often in ballads and blues is a simple roll crescendoing to an abrupt cut, a

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two- or three-beat silence, and then a return to the time playing. This simple device has all the elements of high drama: a quiet introduction, a dynamic increase of tension leading to an abrupt climax, and then a breathless moment before the release of that tension. It sounds much more complicated when described verbally than it is to perform, yet it's very effective. Does the drummer you're studying use devices like this effectively?

3. *Precise execution.* Does the drummer play devices, such as the one described above, cleanly and with precision? The only drawback to using such a device to enhance your music is when you cannot execute it well. In that case, the musical device becomes a detriment rather than an enhancement. You should also listen for a clear definition between accents and time playing.

Precision also refers to the sound of the drums, to the extent that clean sticking can be ruined by loose, buzzy snares, and precise timekeeping can be destroyed by hi-hats closed too loosely, creating a "washy" sound with no pinpoint definition of the time.

4. *Interaction.* Does the drummer work with the other instrumentalists, catching riffs and playing them along with the other players to create "punches" and "kicks" to make the music interesting? Does the drummer sometimes work in a contrapuntal fashion, playing *against* the riffs of the other musicians to create a syncopation? Both of these approaches provide musical variety, as long as they're done sparingly and with control. They can, of course, be overdone, creating the situation of a too busy drummer trying to be a virtuoso instrumentalist and forgetting the drummer's fundamental role as a timekeeper. Too much of a good thing can be just as boring as not enough of it.

5. *Listening.* Does the drummer you're studying listen to what the other musicians in the band are doing, and give them space in which to do it? Most poor playing by club musicians is partially the result of musical egocentricity: They listen only to themselves, and only think about their own part. While this may or may not be done consciously, the result is the same: a very noncohesive sound from several musicians on stage, as opposed to a tight, unified sound from a *band.*

Once you've taken the time to see and hear some of the drummers playing the kind of jobs you play, and have evaluated what it is they do that is good and what might be bad, it's time to go back and evaluate those same elements in your own playing. Incorporate the good, eliminate the bad, and you'll definitely have the edge over your competition!

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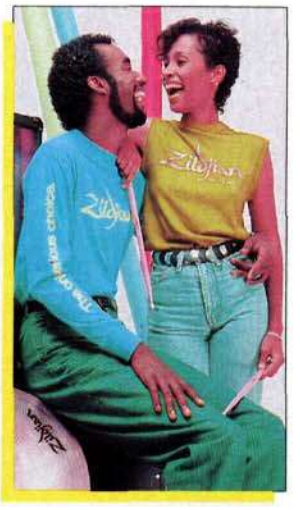

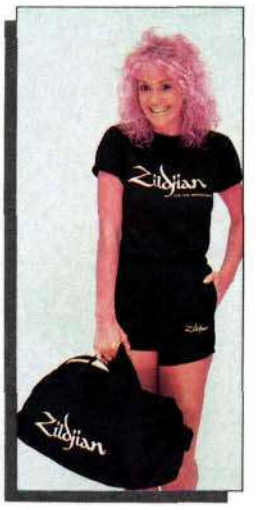

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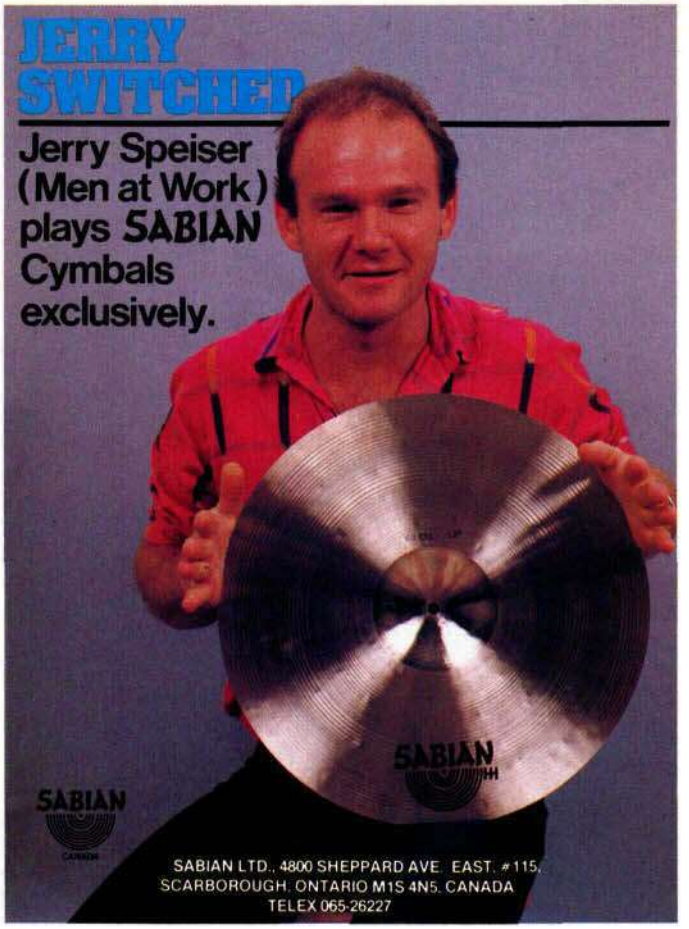

Photo by Jerry Lombardo

Brzezicki *continued from page 17*

high. I find that small drums give me a bigger sound than big drums. I didn't really want to go to the 16" floor tom and then to the 18" model like a lot of rock drummers use. I have obtained just as big a sound using much smaller drums. Also, because they're small, my reach is better for more drums. The bigger the diameter, the wider the kit ends up being. I have my drums very close together, almost touching, and I find it easier to get around. The less work I do, the better I play, because I've got more energy.

I use *Pinstripes* on all the drums except snare drum, because I think they sound the best and they last the longest. I find the *Pinstripe* to be a cross between a Black Dot and an Evans head where you've got slight damping—a self-damping because it's a double skin and they seem to last forever. I don't think I've ever broken a *Pinstripe* head. After a while they just start to sound dull, so I keep my ears open for that. But on a vigorous tour, when I'm playing every night, the *Pinstripes* can last on my toms and bass drum for about two weeks, which is a long time.

SH: You slug them hard, too.

MB: I hit them hard, but they last. I find that when the skin's totally new I don't like it. They ring slightly and they always change. I like them when they start to wear.

On the snare drum, I always use a rough white head. It doesn't last very long, but I find it has the best texture because the rough white surface dampens itself, and it comes closest to the sound I have in my head. They're good for brushes as well. If I do a session and my snare is tuned the way I want it, there's nothing worse than having a clear head when I want to use brushes. There's no friction. I like that friction also for when I stick. When I clout a snare drum, I don't hit directly straight down, and with a clear head the stick can skid off and I can lose my impact. But these rough white heads are perfect for me on the snare drum.

SH: On your 8", 10", 12" and 13" toms, you've got the bottom heads cut out and you've got a mic' inside each drum.

MB: I have it cut because I prefer the staccato sound of the toms. What I've learned by my mistakes is that the smaller drums should be single headed and more staccato, for me, at least. Smaller drums, tuned high, don't need a bottom head. They're staccato.

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With bigger drums, I can put a bottom head on to give them more ambience and more bass tone—that drop in tone that most drummers like. I leave my four rack toms open headed because I like the continuity, and I play them the most. When I come off them, I like the floor toms to be very bassy and thunderous.

SH: It makes for a larger contrast. What's the story on the cymbals?

MB: Well, I'm using Paiste. I've got an assortment of hi-hats at the moment. For sessions, I might put up my *2002s,* but at the moment, I'm using a *Rude Sound Edge* on the bottom and a *Rude* standard bottom hi-hat cymbal on the top for a very metallic sound. It sounds like a triangle when you open it up if you use the tip of the stick. And I find it extremely clean sounding for the "tick" sound. The hi-hat should be very compatible with the ride. I think that they're very similar things. I do have a Zildjian cymbal that I like because of its bell, but I find that the Paiste 20" 2002 heavy ride has great continuity to the *Rude* hi-hats. They both have tight definition. It's no good having a very tingy ride and mushy hi-hat sound.

In front of the hi-hats there's a 16" 2002, and then directly beside it is a 13" 505 paper thin. I go through a lot of them for obvious reasons. Above that I have an 18" China type *Rude* which is very aggressive-sounding. And to the right of that I use an 18" 2002 crash, which is quite standard. There's a good contrast between that and the 16" crash. Below that is my ride, which normally varies from a Formula 602 to a 2002 20" heavy ride. Then come the small bells. One is a Paiste 8" bell. Above that is an icebell—UFIP—as Paiste doesn't make anything like that. Above that is an incredible range of cymbals that I'm completely knocked out with for crashes—the 505 line. I think they're better than the 2002s, frankly.

SH: Why?

MB: I think crash cymbals should be hit and then they should disappear. I don't like them to be too boomy. I have the China cymbals for the boominess. I like extreme contrast in my cymbals, so that's why I've got a lot of different sizes and shapes. The 505s have a very fast cutout and actually do what a crash cymbal says—"crash"! Actually, the 505 is a cross between a splash and a crash.

SH: A smash.

MB: Exactly! The 505s are actually a cheaper range than the 2002, but I think buying expensive crash cymbals is silly. You wear them out, and I like cheap-sounding crashes—the trashy sort. To my right I've got two China cymbals. The bottom one is what's called "a Ray Man genuine China-type cymbal."

SH: Is that the one that sounds like a door slamming on "In A Big Country"?

MB: That's the one. It's very gravelly, very earthy and unpolished. It doesn't look very nice. I even think it's got a slight crack in it. It cost me about 60 pounds in London. It's very cheap and lots and lots of drummers are using it. Simon Phillips, Stewart Copeland, Phil Collins and a lot of other people are using these "Ray Man" imported cymbals.

SH: All the drummers who can't afford decent cymbals, eh?

MB: Yeah, right. It's just that they have a certain sound that no other cymbal manufacturer has managed to achieve. And it's basically because they're a no-nonsense bit of material beaten out by hand, bent and then slung in a shop with hundreds of others. It's like the genuine Chinese percussion, as it were. And you have to drill a hole in it to put it on a stand. That's how raw they are; they come almost unfinished. And then you have to "de-burr" the edges. Otherwise you cut your hand because it's totally raw when you get it. They're very, very cheap, but the sound of them is incredible. I've had that one for about five years, which is a pretty long time for a cymbal. It's just starting to get a slight hairline crack that I might have welded up.

Above that is a Paiste *Nova China,* which is perhaps the loudest holocaust-type cymbal sound I've ever heard. I use it when tension on the stage is mounting and there's a lot of "kerrang," because it's complete energy and explosion—a white-noise kind of thing. It's the one with the inverted bell, and the supposed gimmick of

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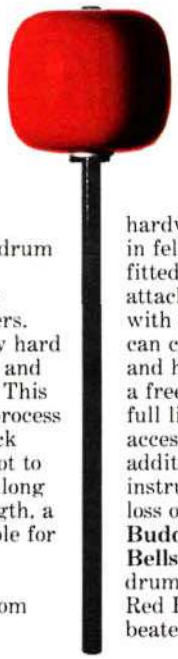

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being a China cymbal with a bell. But the way I have it placed, I don't actually reach the bell. I don't particularly like the sound of the bell, but the edge is brilliant, if used sparsely.

SH: And your snare drums?

MB: Ah, yes. Several, sometimes simultaneously. On my left, I've got a new Pearl 8" with the new *Super Gripper* lug system. 1 was a little sceptical at first because of the wood shell. I found that there was always something dull about wood snares. They never really cracked enough. Hence I was using Ludwigs for a while—the *Black Beauty* and the *400* as well. But I found that this Pearl snare gave me as much crack as the metal Ludwigs. Since it has the depth, I could tune it quite high and still get a lot of depth in the tone. Being wood, it was a warm sound but it would still really crack. I was really, really impressed with it.

I've also been playing around with the free-floating snare drums which I'm completely amazed with. The brass one in particular has perhaps the loudest crack I've ever heard in a snare drum. I haven't actually stripped it down to see how it all fits together, but the engineering looks impeccable, as usual, and it certainly sounds amazing as well.

With Big Country the attack—the crack of the snare drum—is my main concern. With this band, I would use the brass snare, whereas in a session with someone else, I might put the wood drum up. In the studio with different bands, the important thing is to have the facilities to adapt to the songs.

The other important thing is to project your character. I think it's the way you hit the drum that always brings your character out—how you play it, more so than just the drum itself. So carrying different drums allows me to be flexible, yet I can maintain my character because it's always me playing, no matter what drum I might be using. Different drums are used for different feels or effects.

SH: You're dealing mostly with deep-shell snare drums. Do you ever go smaller than that?

MB: I have a very old Ludwig 5" acrolyte snare drum, and that's got a very thin, very sharp orchestral sound. I've used it for military-sounding or orchestral-like passages. It's good for press rolls and lighter things. I carry it around in case I need it, but it's not my general work-a-day drum. What I have been using up to this point is a Ludwig *Black Beauty,* but it looks as if my general work-a-day snare will now be this Pearl free-floating brass snare.

SH: Any particular reason why you started playing Pearl drums?

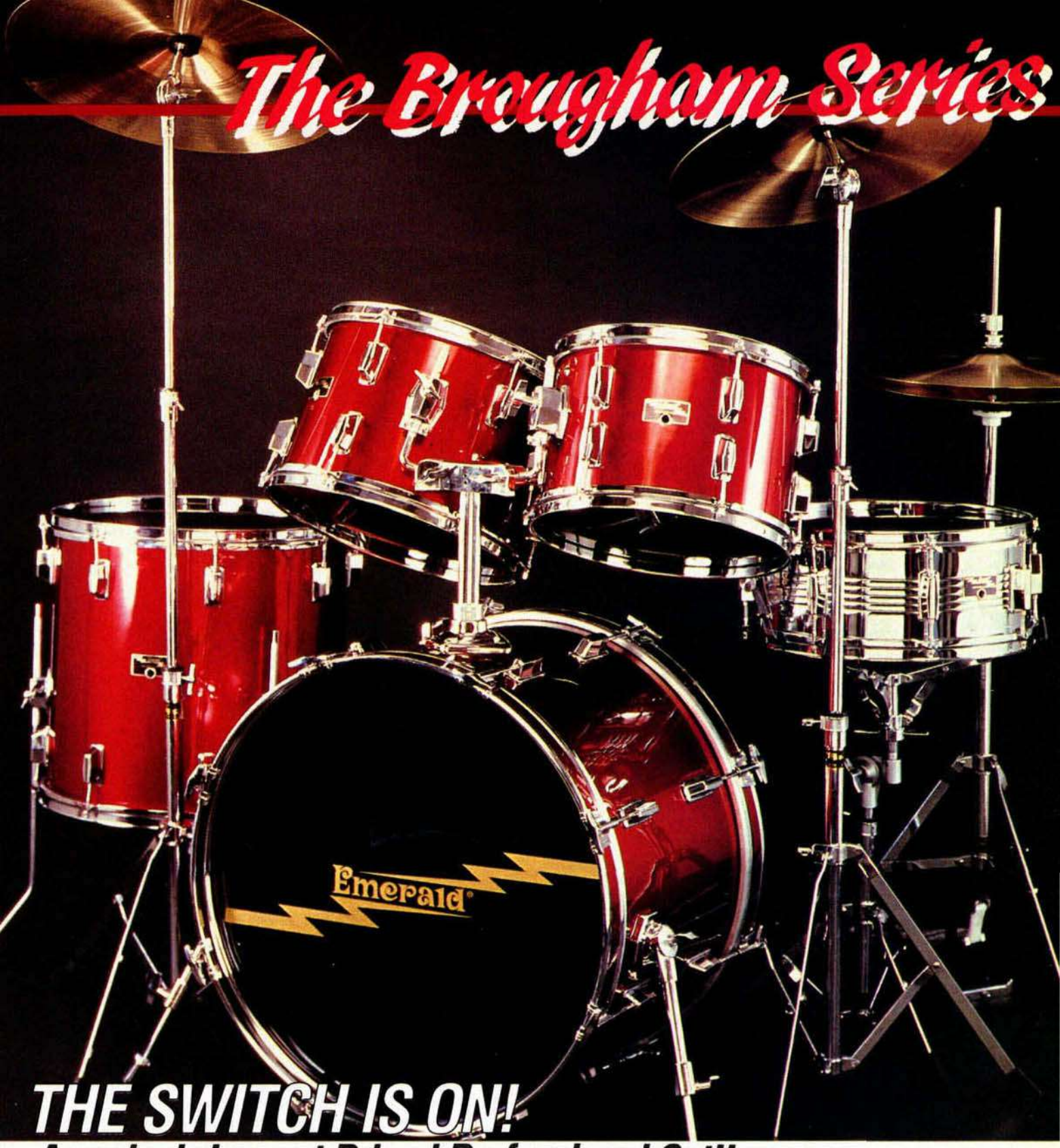
MB: Yes. I was an aircraft engineer for six years at the same time as I was playing the pubs and clubs. So the engineering is very important to me: good logical designs. Pearl seems to be into design, and that's one of the things that attracted me to Pearl: They put a lot of thought into it and they do listen to drummers. The only way you can get firsthand information is from the people who actually play the instrument.

SH: True. To finish your snare drum setup . . .

MB: I was using an old Rogers, but now I've got the Pearl piccolo brass snare off to the left of the hi-hat. Sometimes when we recorded, I used two snare drums—one tuned very, very high and one tuned quite low, using the high one for a sort of Bill Bruford sound. It added another color. I did that on some of the B-sides of our records. Also, if you look at the way the hi-hat is, I always have to cross my hands, which is a pain. I'd like to be able to play left-handed like Phillips or Cobham. By having another snare on the left, I'm not crossing my hands and I can get a completely different attitude playing that way. I can be moving my hands around in a circular pattern with the hi-hats between two snares, and it puts the snare beats in funny places. I get an interesting combination.

SH: When you do that, are you playing traditional grip or matched?

MB: Again it depends on what I'm doing. If I get around the hi-hat region, I tend to play traditional because that's my softer playing. When it starts to drive and my right hand goes to the ride or the China cymbals, I'll switch to butt end in the left hand. I've also gotten a lot of ideas from using the *Octobans* as well. Most of it comes from playing on my own.



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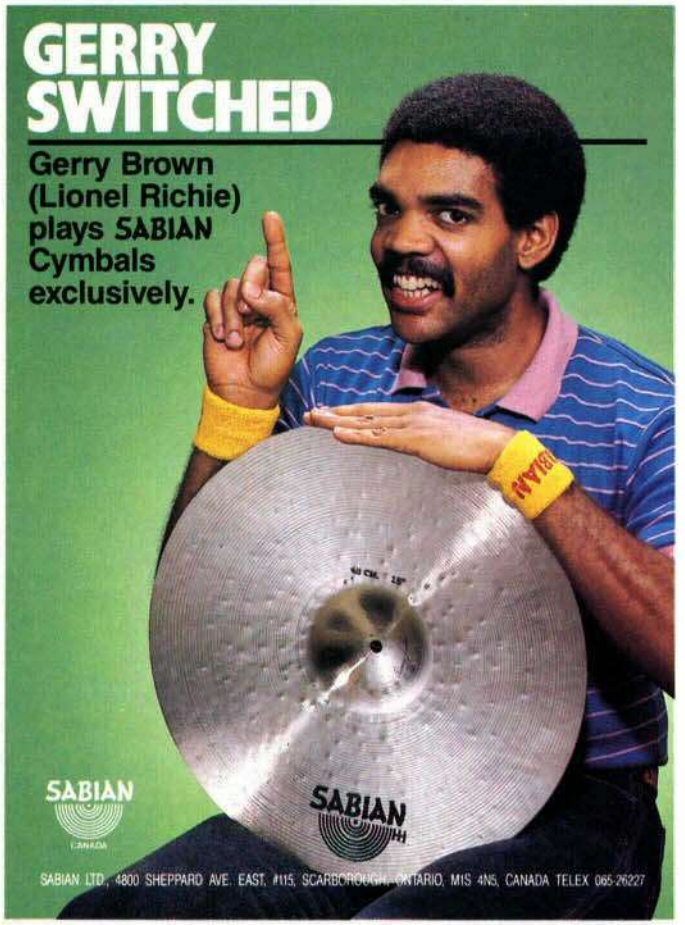
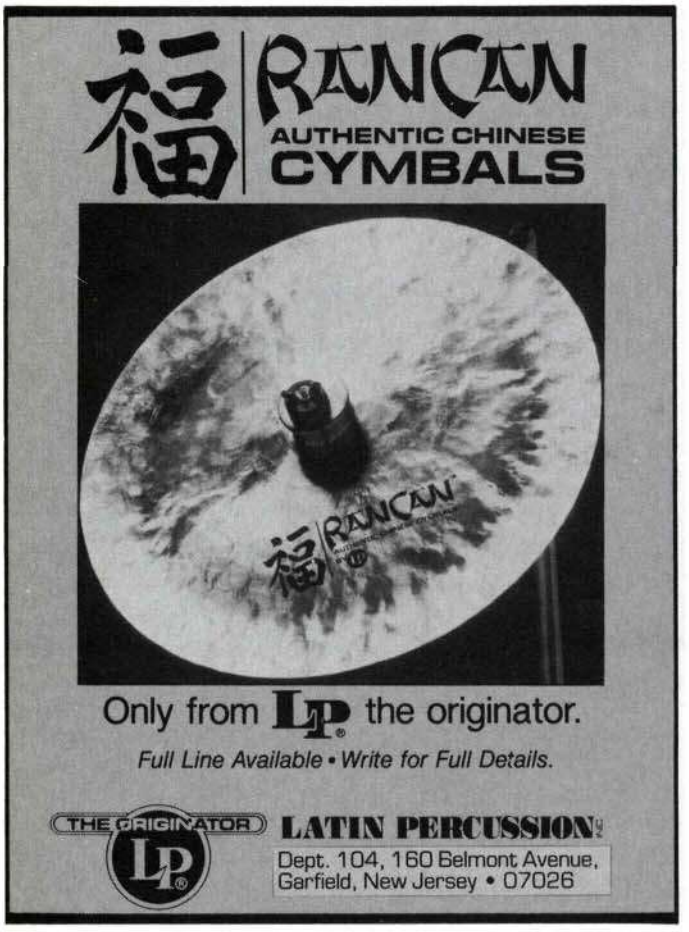




I rehearse a lot on my own. I hire a hall and practice. I do this because when I get the facilities to play with a group, I'm accompanying the band and it doesn't give me much time for experimenting. So I like to come to soundchecks early or hire halls on my own. And I don't think enough is being experimented with on *Octobans,* because I find them to be very exciting drums. They're very fast and they've got very unusual sounds. Since they're small in diameter and tuned high, I can do very fast double-stick work on them. And they've got almost a timbale-type effect because they're so staccato. But I've found that, when I play rhythms across them and go on to the snare, and then on to the second snare set up as a timbale with the snares off, they produce a sound similar to African or reggae rhythms. Instead of thrashing across the toms as I often do, or playing the ride, I substitute the hi-hat for the ride and the pop on the *Octobans.* I find that exciting.

SH: So you see yourself doing a lot more of that kind of thing?

MB: Yeah. Just by playing a regular beat and then putting your hand on a different thing, you can get a lot of interesting rhythms. It changes the tone and color completely. That's the kind of thing I like to work on.

SH: You don't practice at home at all?

MB: No. I can't. I still live at home with my parents in Slough, which is about two miles from Windsor; I'd bother the queen!

SH: When you were coming up, where did you practice?

MB: I had my practice from actually playing all the time. When I first started, I was suddenly thrown in the deep end, always playing with better musicians than myself at pubs and workingmen's clubs. I was always involved in playing cover versions, which meant that I had to learn other people's songs on which the drumming was already good.

It was like that all the time. Practice came from playing every night of the week: aircraft engineer in the day, and at night put on the bow tie and play bossa nova, brushes, "Girl From Ipanema," fox-trot. I'd play all the traditional rhythms which came from all those people dancing. And I found that there was complete ignorance in the rock business. All the drummers could do was open the hi-hat and thrash in 4/4. But for my pub playing, I had to listen to people like Steve Gadd, Harvey Mason, Phil Collins, Simon Phillips, Jeff Porcaro, Stewart Copeland, Mark Craney and Bernard Purdie.

I still like to play in different situations. When I have the time, I like to set my kit up in a pub somewhere, get a keyboard player and some other people, and just play fusion—9/8, 5/4 and that kind of thing. I've got hosts of musicians I can work with just for fun to keep my own playing together and keep my technique up. These are scratch bands in which you have different musicians every week. You get five of them together, and just have a good time playing and talking about music and albums. It's a nice environment.

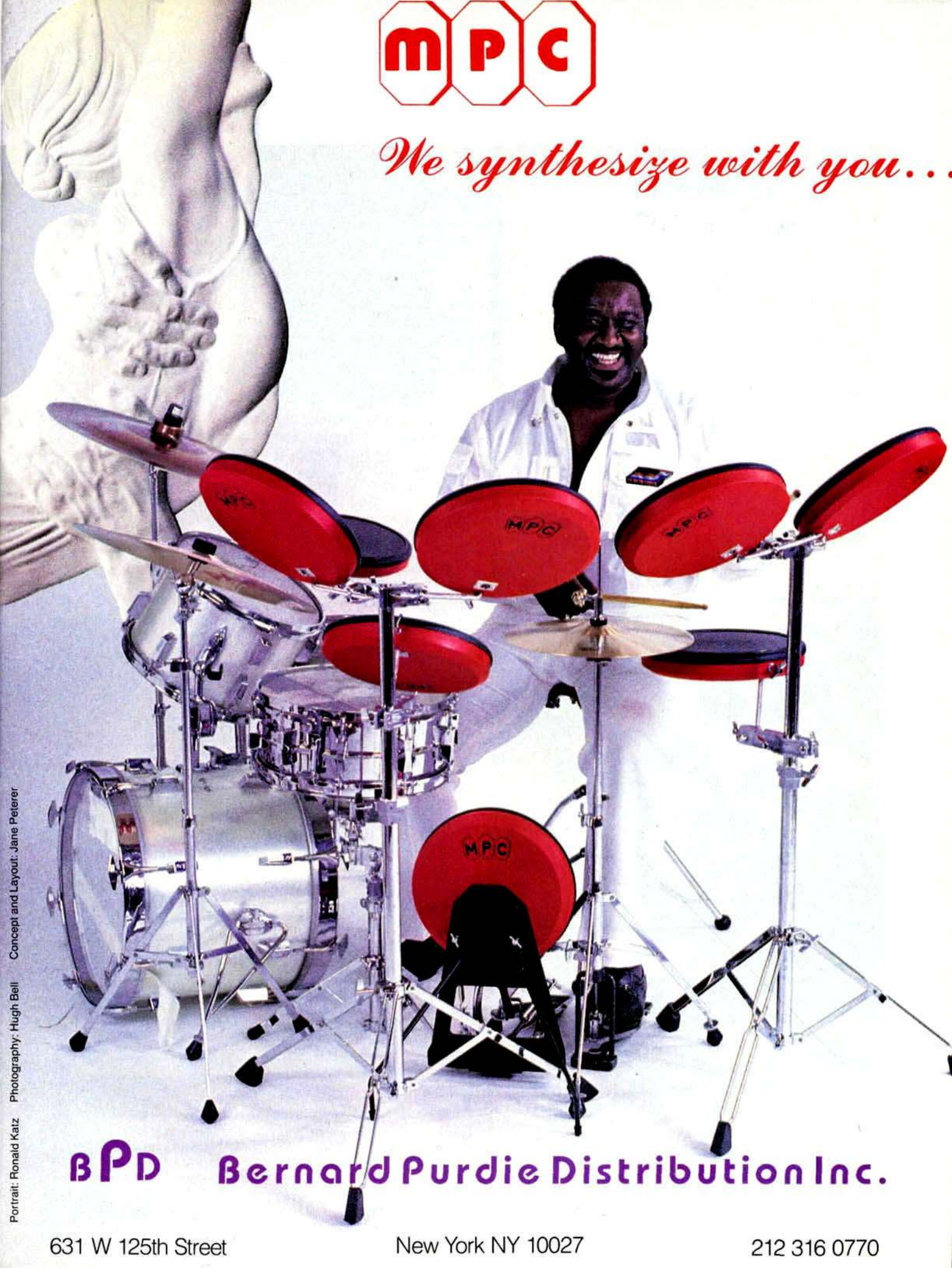
SH: It's obvious from watching you play that you have a real love for what you're doing. It's become just a job to so many people.

MB: I live, drink and sleep drums. To me, this is the easiest thing I've ever done for a living. I don't find any pressures at all. If I find that a day goes by and I haven't looked at my drums or played them, I'm itching to play. For the last ten years, I've always had that strong feeling inside of wanting the drumkit.

SH: And you also carry your own drumkit on tour with you, rather than just carrying cymbals like a lot of other people do.

MB: I think my ear gets used to my own drumkit, and how I hear them affects the way 1 play. If I have a bad monitor sound, I play badly because I don't like what I'm hearing. So I carry my own drums because they help in that respect. I'm used to them and maybe, psychologically, I feel like I'm at home. I see the same drums in England and Japan. To me, I'm at home, so that keeps up my confidence and gives me that desire to play. I find that difficult to do with a strange kit.

Once I had to rent a drumkit, and it felt strange. There was always something slightly wrong. Drummers are so fussy; it could be a millimeter out and I would know it. It would bother me all night.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My Pearl drums all have memory locks, so when the roadie sets them up, they're always the same. If I rent a kit, I spend an hour setting it up. "Is that right? No, over a little to the left. Is that alright? No, down a little—no, too far. Bring it up and over a little. Is that right? Well, I'm not sure." So I go on stage with a hope that all will go well, but I'm not that confident, although I should be. I shouldn't really care, but it's that personal to me—very personal.

I think maintenance of the drumkit is incredibly important. If anything moves, it has to be oiled. Once it's oiled, I have to have it wiped clean so it doesn't attract dust. This comes from my aircraft days. I like spring washers on things so there's no vibration. I don't like things touching because they wear. If they do, I'll put on tape. I have to have a clean drumkit always.

Some gig situations have been humorous. My drums have been subjected to all kinds of things. We played this small club where beer was spilt on them and everybody's sweat dripped on them. When that happens, they get stripped down, wiped, repolished, reoiled, rebuilt and a new head is put on. I hate to see a kit in neglect. Immediately after the gig, it's "flight cased" up and goes to the next place. My drum roadie is very in tune to what I need and do, and he does exactly what I say. But normally when I come to a soundcheck, I still go around the kit like it was an airplane and check it thoroughly.

I can honestly say that I've done two American tours, seven British tours and now a Japanese tour, and my drumkit has not failed once. Nothing has ever broken, fallen off or snapped. I think it's because I've given it a lot of preventive maintenance. If I see something that has been bashed through negligence, I have it replaced immediately, find who bashed it, and it doesn't get bashed again. You've got flight cases and common sense, so there's no excuse for a drumkit to be in a deteriorated state. If you don't have respect for an instrument, you can't expect to get results back. That's one of the two things drummers should remember.

SH: What's the other one?

MB: Never tune your snare drum like a wet fish.

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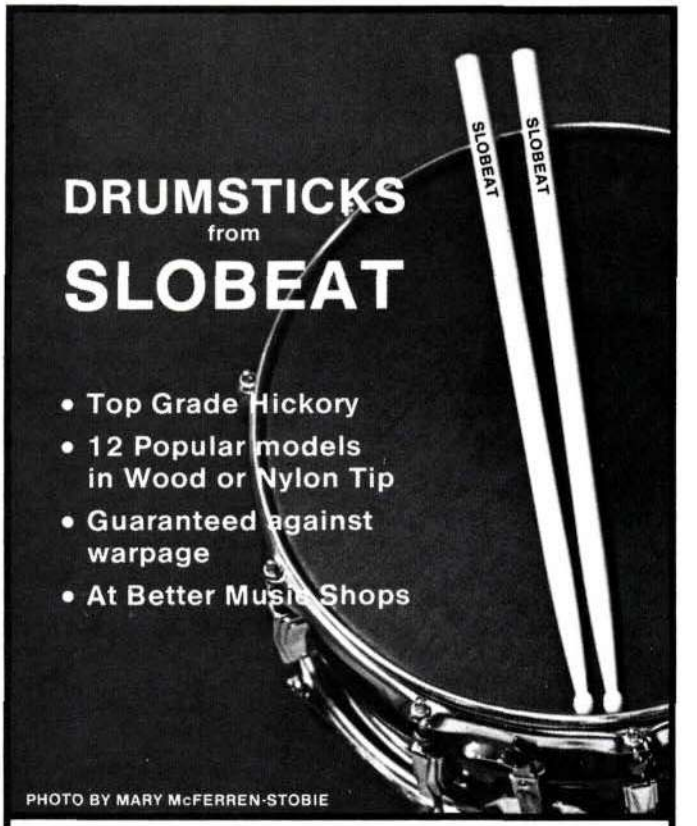

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by George Marsh

Exploring Self-Awareness: Scanning

In the August/September '82 issue of *MD,* I wrote an article for *Jazz Drummers Workshop* that dealt with the importance of correct posture when seated at the drumset. The response to that article astounded me as 1 received letters from all over the United States and the rest of the world. The drummers had one plea in common: What else can I do to help my drumming in a physical way, especially with regards to internal awareness? Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to solve someone's personal drumming problems without seeing them in person, but there is something that 1 can pass on that has helped my own playing and the playing of my students tremendously. I am talking about the use of internal visualization or *scanning.*

When I sit down to do my daily exercises (Hatha Yoga), the first thing I do is focus with my mind's eye on each part of my body, starting with the feet and working slowly and patiently through each part of the body. The effect of doing this is to bring relaxation and warmth to the parts thus observed. During this *scanning,* I often come across places that are tight or sore, and the internal observation of these areas very often is enough to bring relief. The more one works with this type of visualization, the easier and more effective it becomes.

When I began my study of the martial art T'ai chi ch'uan (highly recommended), I noticed that it was extremely helpful to be aware of the energy flow from limb to limb when performing the various moves. Awareness brought more effective moves, and conversely, non-awareness caused the moves to be imperfect and weak! After observing the effect that scanning had on my Yoga and T'ai chi ch'uan, it became obvious that I needed to explore scanning as applied to drumming. Since the drumset has the drummer using four limbs, I thought it would first be necessary to scan between the various combinations of two limbs. So I explored the six combinations: bass drum—right hand; bass drum—left hand; bass drum—hi-hat; hi-hat—left hand; hi-hat—right hand; and hi-hat—bass drum. The results were that I was able to learn complex patterns more easily, my drumming became more relaxed and centered, and I was able to play more melodically because energy was flowing more freely *inside* my body! Here at last was a technique to help with the *internal* body feelings that occur while playing the drumset.

Start *your* scanning with a particular set of two limbs, say the right foot and the right hand. (Fig. 1) Play some strokes with the bass drum and then relax the foot completely, feeling the warmth thus generated. Notice the toes, the arch, the ball of the foot, the heel—the whole foot. When scanning, it is helpful to go from joint to joint, so observe the ankle, working through the calf to the knee. From the knee, go through the thigh to the right hip joint, the lower torso (pelvic area) and then work up the torso, observing the belly, the stomach, the lungs, etc. When you reach the right shoulder joint, visualize energy flowing down the right upper arm to the elbow—from the elbow through the forearm to the wrist—from the wrist through the hand and each finger. Feel how each finger touches the stick. Now play a few strokes with the right arm. This scanning from right foot to right hand could take from one to many minutes, depending on how much you get into the observation of each part of your body. Remember, scanning is the observation of what is happening inside your body, and often things like muscle aches or numbness will take care of themselves as you develop the ability to focus. After playing with the right hand, scan, with the same amount of care as before, from the fingertips back through the body to the right foot. (Fig. 2) It would be very helpful if you would have a friend read this paragraph to you, thus allowing you to focus with full attention. When you have completed this cycle, scan back and forth between the two limbs making a single stroke with each limb. If you just play the bass drum and then the right hand without feeling internally, you are not doing the exercise correctly. Remember, the purpose of these exercises is to develop the inner sense of energy flowing from limb to limb.

When you feel satisfied with the right-foot/right-hand combination, move to one of the other combinations. Please take your time; it may take several days to experience all of the combinations.

Figure 1

Figure 2

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by William F. Miller

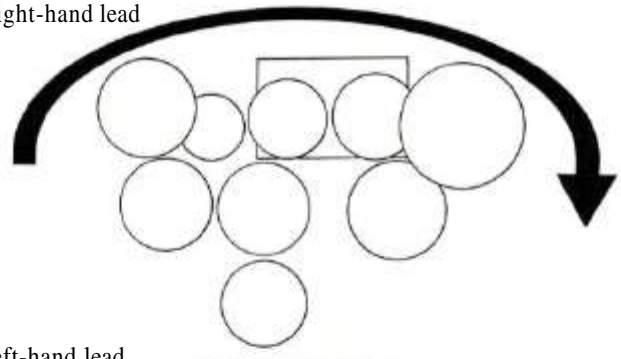
The Benefits Of Left-Hand Ride

What do Billy Cobham, Simon Phillips, Kenny Aronoff, Daniel Humair, and Lenny White have in common? They all play ride patterns with their left hand. Left-hand ride refers to the technique drummers use who play drumset in a normal, right-hand configuration. However, these drummers play ride patterns on the hi-hat and ride cymbal (on the left side) using the left hand (matched grip). With the list of notable and innovative drummers previously mentioned who employ this technique, clearly it can be used successfully.

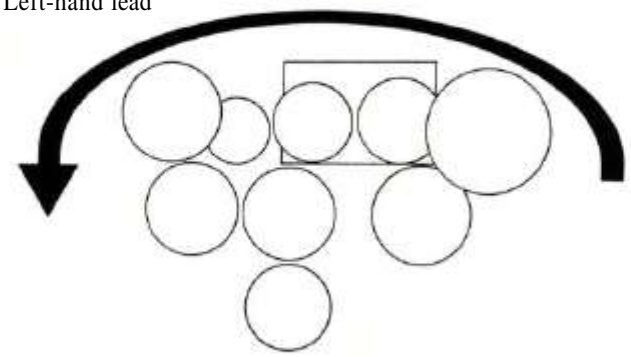
Learning to incorporate left-hand ride techniques can add new dimensions to your playing. First of all, most right-hand drummers have disproportionate strength and coordination in their hands. No matter how much time a person spends practicing evenness between hands, the right hand dominates the two. Riding with the left hand increases the strength of the left hand. Both hands become more equal in power and technique. Not only are power and strength gained, but an overall finesse and touch come about.

Generally, when playing a ride pattern on a cymbal, right-hand drummers hold the stick in the right hand with a thumbs-up type grip. The left hand is either in a traditional grip or a matched grip, palm-down hand position. Drummers who ride with the left hand develop the thumbs-up grip in the left hand. Thus, right *and* left hands are capable of playing a truly matched, thumbs-up type grip around the entire kit. It is not necessary to switch from one hand position to another when going from the ride cymbal to a fill. Billy Cobham is a good example of a drummer who has developed his hands so that he plays with his thumbs up, either when riding or when playing on the drums. His grip is a timpani-like (French) grip, which allows him to use the smaller muscles of the hands for greater speed and control. Left-hand ride also helps to increase your coordination. Most drummers play fills from the left side of the kit to the right (see figure 1), beginning with the right hand. Left-hand ride gives you the coordination to begin fills with the left hand and move from the right side to the left (see figure 2).

Right-hand lead



Left-hand lead



Another advantage of left-hand ride is that there is no crossing of sticks or hands in playing the hi-hat. Most right-handed drummers playing rock or funk have to deal with the problem of moving their right hand out of the way so a backbeat can be played by the left hand. Riding with the left avoids crossing over (and getting in the way) to play the hi-hat. Also, since there is no crossing, the right hand can strike the snare drum without being impeded, allowing you to play the loudest backbeat humanly possible! Many times, drummers who also sing have problems crossing over to the hi-hat and singing. Left-hand ride allows you to be more open to the audience while singing and playing, and helps your posture for singing.

As drummers move to larger setups, they tend to place the ride cymbal and hi-hat further away and higher up. Drummers who ride with their right have to reach over racks of toms (and lately over extra rows of electronic drums too) to get to the ride cymbal. Having an arm lifted up and playing ride cymbal for a period of time can become fatiguing. Also, drummers who use two bass drums have the problem of the hi-hat being too far left, due to the addition of the second bass drum. Even with the various devices which attach the hi-hat to the second bass drum, the hi-hat still is further out, causing right-hand ride drummers to cross, reach and turn their bodies just to play the hi-hat. Left-hand ride solves all of these problems. The ride cymbal can be as close as necessary, because there aren't as many things on the left side to get in the way. The hi-hat being placed further left poses no problems to the left-hand ride technique.

Probably the best reason for utilizing left-hand ride techniques is the interesting patterns this technique brings about. While playing ride patterns with the left hand, the right hand is free to incorporate toms and other percussive instruments located on the right side of the kit in creative and musical ways. Also, with the hi-hat *and* the ride cymbal on the left side, interesting patterns can be played between the two. (See the end of this article for examples.)

Developing the left-hand ride technique can be difficult, especially for drummers who have been playing for a few years, but with a little work, it can be achieved. In a way, it is like starting over. When beginning to work on left-hand ride, a lot can be done even before sitting behind the kit. On a pad, practice 8th notes with the left hand and play backbeats with the right. Start by just concentrating on your hands; don't worry about your feet yet. At first, it feels very awkward because the left hand is not used to working so hard continuously. A good way to take your mind off the awkwardness is to play along with records. Put on a recording that has a simple rock or swing feel, and play very standard beats.

Once the motion of the left hand becomes a bit more natural, then move to the drums. One tip: Adjust the hi-hat height so that it is approximately the same as the snare drum (see photograph).

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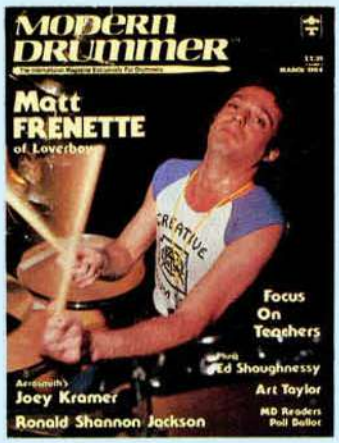

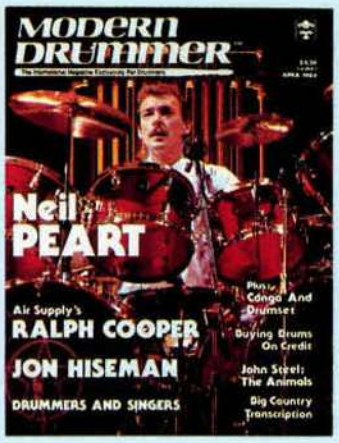

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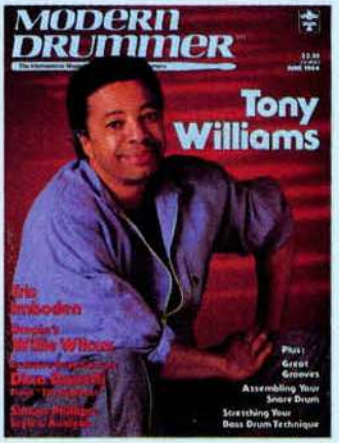

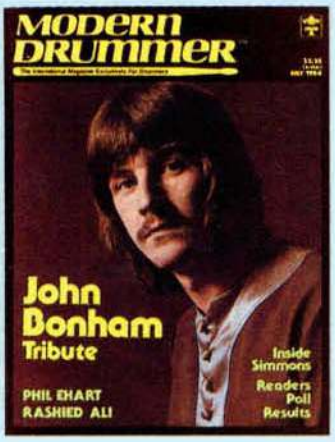

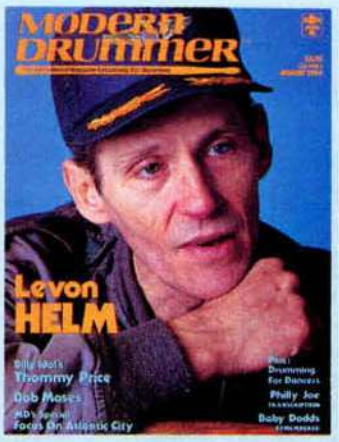

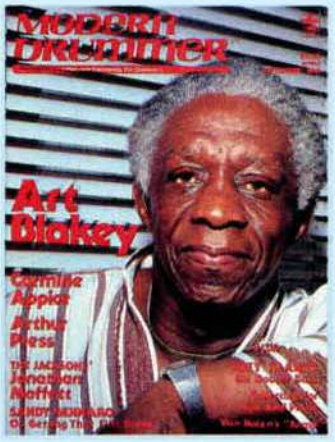

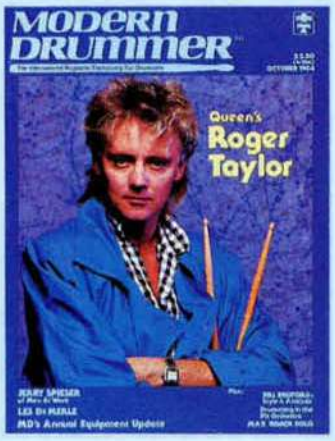

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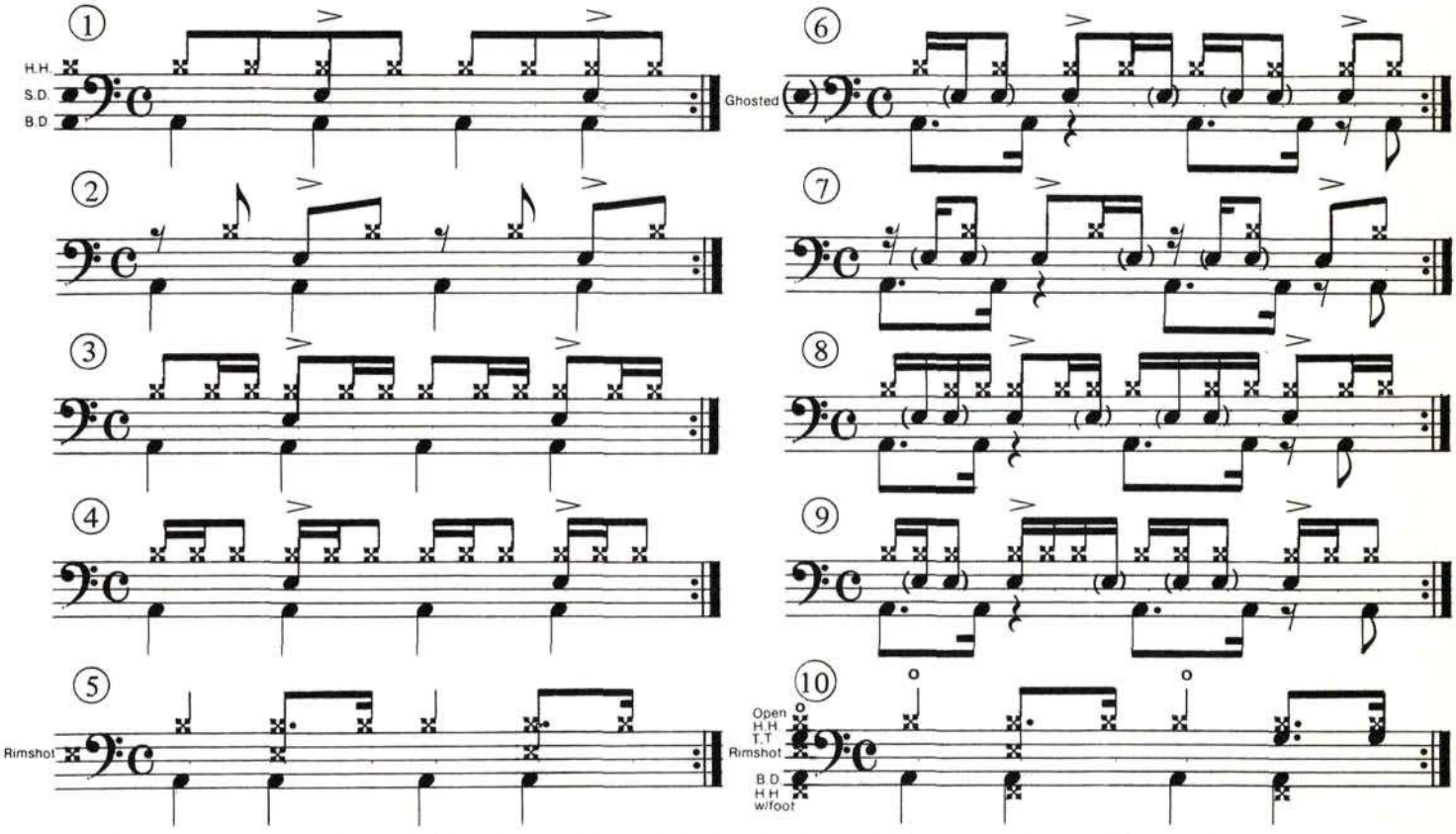
This helps in two ways: (1) It forces you to use your left hand, because the right hand can't cross and play the hi-hat that low. (2) That height allows you to play the hi-hat comfortably with the left hand using either the tip or shank of the stick. Begin working on just the hi-hat. Once that feels comfortable, place the ride cymbal next to the hi-hat and work on that. The hi-hat is easier to start with because touch sensitivity is not as precise on the hi-hat as it is on the ride cymbal. Once again, the main thing to remember is that it will feel awkward at first, so give it time. Use study materials that are simple and for beginners. Your progression will increase rapidly as soon as you get the basics down.

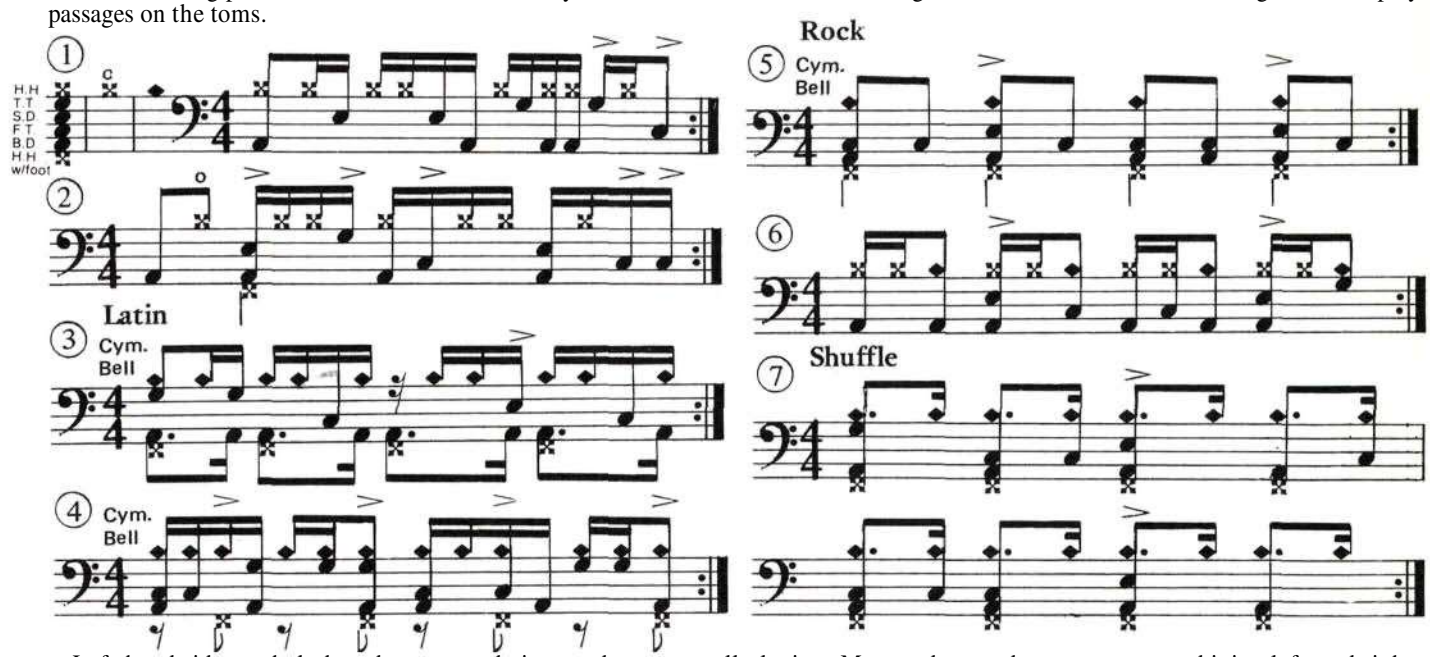
The patterns which follow are very basic. These exercises allow you to concentrate on the left-hand pattern, keeping the other limbs simplified. Practice these with a metronome, starting slowly and working up to a faster speed. As simple as these patterns are, be sure to concentrate on producing an even sound with the left hand, and also make sure the patterns groove.

L.H. on hi-hat R.H. on snare drum



Now play these patterns moving the left hand to the ride cymbal. Play the hi-hat with foot on 2 and 4, on all four, and on 8th notes where applicable.

The following patterns are more advanced. They demonstrate some of the advantages of left-hand ride with a free right hand to play passages on the toms.



Left-hand ride can help broaden your technique and your overall playing. More and more drummers are combining left- and right-hand techniques to make themselves more versatile. You have two hands, so why not use them?

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Avory continued from page 21

was the one drummer I used to admire the most. He had a lot of flair and was one of those guys who became good while he was still very young. He developed quickly and had very good bass drum technique. He also had a nice feel—one that I never heard before. It really suited the Hollies.

RS: But were you influenced by him?

MA: Yeah. I used to talk with him because he could do stuff better than I could. Through talking with other drummers, you pick up ideas and new techniques. That's how I learned.

RS: Were there any other drummers?

MA: No, because I didn't really know anyone then. I mean, I knew of Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich—all drummers did—but they were from a different era and a different music. In rock 'n' roll, I didn't really know anyone, to be honest. Much later on, though, I met Billy Cobham, Steve Gadd and Bernard Purdie. They're all great.

RS: Can you recall your very first drumkit?

MA: I got my very first one when I was with a skiffle group. 1 belonged to a scout troop and some of the fellows formed a skiffle group. That was all very exciting. First I used a drum set on a chair with a scrub brush and a stick—very basic, you might say. [laughs] Then, I got a snare drum on a stand and a homemade cymbal which was attached to the snare. I bought a set of brushes and really got into it. We started doing gigs for ten shillings and really enjoyed it. From them, I gradually pieced a kit together. I think I got a hi-hat next, and a Boy Scout bass drum and bass drum pedal. But I became fed up with that equipment, so I saved up some money and got a proper kit. Again, it was a mixture of drums; most of it consisted of Ajax drums. Then, when I began playing with the Kinks, I got a Rogers kit. Back then, the kits Rogers sold in America were different from the ones sold in England. I had an English kit, but the American drums were much better. The English drums were too light. The rims were about two inches deep, and when you put the skin on, you never hit the skin; you'd hit the rim. Anyway, I kept that kit for a year or so, and then bought a Ludwig kit. That was a good kit. I used that one for a long time. I got a new Ludwig kit in the States, but I had to surrender the old one. I wish I hadn't because the old one was better. From there I went to Gretsch drums, and from Gretsch, to Sonor. I'm still playing Sonor drums today—at least my stage kit is Sonor. I'm thinking of going back to Ludwig and completing the circle.

RS: What is your Sonor kit made up of?

MA: I carry three rack toms: 9 x 13, 10 x 14, and 12x 15, plus an 18 x 18 floor tom, a 24" bass drum, an 18" crash, a 25" ride and a big China cymbal on the right-hand side of the kit for certain pieces we do. I also have 14" hi-hats. As for pedals, I've been through different ones, but I usually use a Premier pedal. I've been through various snares, too. But I'm currently using a Pearl, which sounds good on stage.

RS: I can assume, then, that you use a different kit in the studio?

MA: I'll use anything in the studio—anything that works. Recently I've used a Yamaha kit. The snare and the bass drum are the two most important drums for me, so I have to make sure they sound right. In the studio, there are so many different things you can do. I mean, you can make a cardboard box sound good in there.

RS: Recording techniques and drums have gotten so complex in the past five years or so. Do you ever long for the days when recording and playing drums were less complicated, shall we say, than they are today?

MA: Yeah, I do. That's why I don't get tied up with gadgets and things the way many other drummers do. I try to keep up with the times; I have a Simmons kit coming. That's something I plan to use in the studio. But when I get it, I wonder how much I'll really use it. If nothing else, I'll keep it here in the studio where I can always rent it out or something.

RS: So you don't use the electronic drum pieces live?

MA: No, not usually. I try to keep everything as basic as possible. That's what the Kinks are known for, anyway. That goes back to what I said before about the group returning to its roots. If I do get tied up with too many gadgets, it might change the

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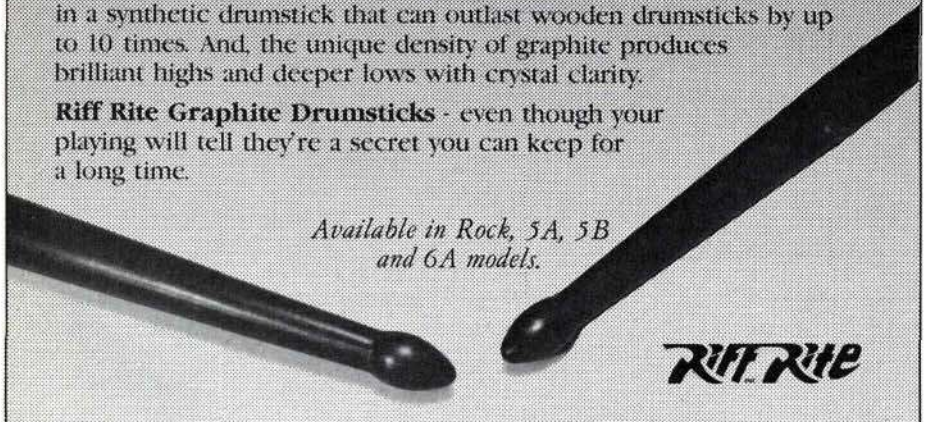

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sound of the group too much, not to mention the feel. Sometimes we'll play things and say to ourselves, "That sounds good, but it doesn't sound like us." So we have to change it. We have an identity; we can't move too far away from that.

RS: Let's talk for a moment about one particular aspect of your drumming, say, your cymbal work, and trace it from your early days with the Kinks to today.

MA: My cymbal work hasn't changed all that much over the years. I probably, however, play more fours than I used to. I used to play a lot of eights, but I found that it could be quite restricting with what I did with my other limbs. I was tied up concentrating on my right hand, and I was not really slapping it down with my left and pushing the rhythm along. If the song gets beyond a certain tempo, I tend to drop back to a four. Of course, by the end of the day when it's all mixed in, you can't tell the difference anyway, can you? When I play in big venues, I naturally tend to simplify things; I go to half tempos and things. I try not to get too carried away up there on stage. Another thing, 1 never used to play a lot of cymbals; I think I played less than most drummers. But recently, I'm playing more cymbals and punctuating on them more now than I ever did.

RS: Back in the early and mid-'60s, were your drums ever miked?

MA: No, we never used to mike back then. I used to play them as they were. Someone else asked me that same question. Now, of course, everything is miked. I have a mic' inside my bass drum and the front skin is removed. I also put padding in the bass drum and try different mic' positions until I get a good sound. I also have a mic' under the snare and one over the top. Depending on where we are, it either works or it doesn't. Then there's an individual mic' for each tom-tom and a little pencil mic' for the hi-hat.

RS: Has the advent of such thorough miking and the increased efficiency of monitors enabled you to play more softly than you did in the old days?

MA: Not really, because it makes a difference to the feel of the song if you play softly. Your drums have to have bite and a sense of urgency. It's hard to get that if you play softly. I play loud, almost as if there weren't any mic's around.

RS: What would you say are some of your stronger points as a drummer?

MA: One of my strongest points *isn't* speed, I can tell you that. Speed doesn't come naturally to me. I think I have to concentrate and work on speed more than most drummers. What I do have is power. I have strong arms and strong hands, so I have no problem there. That's probably my strongest area.

RS: How do you feel about touring? Needless to say, you've spent many a day on the road. Do you find it tedious to tour at this stage of your career?

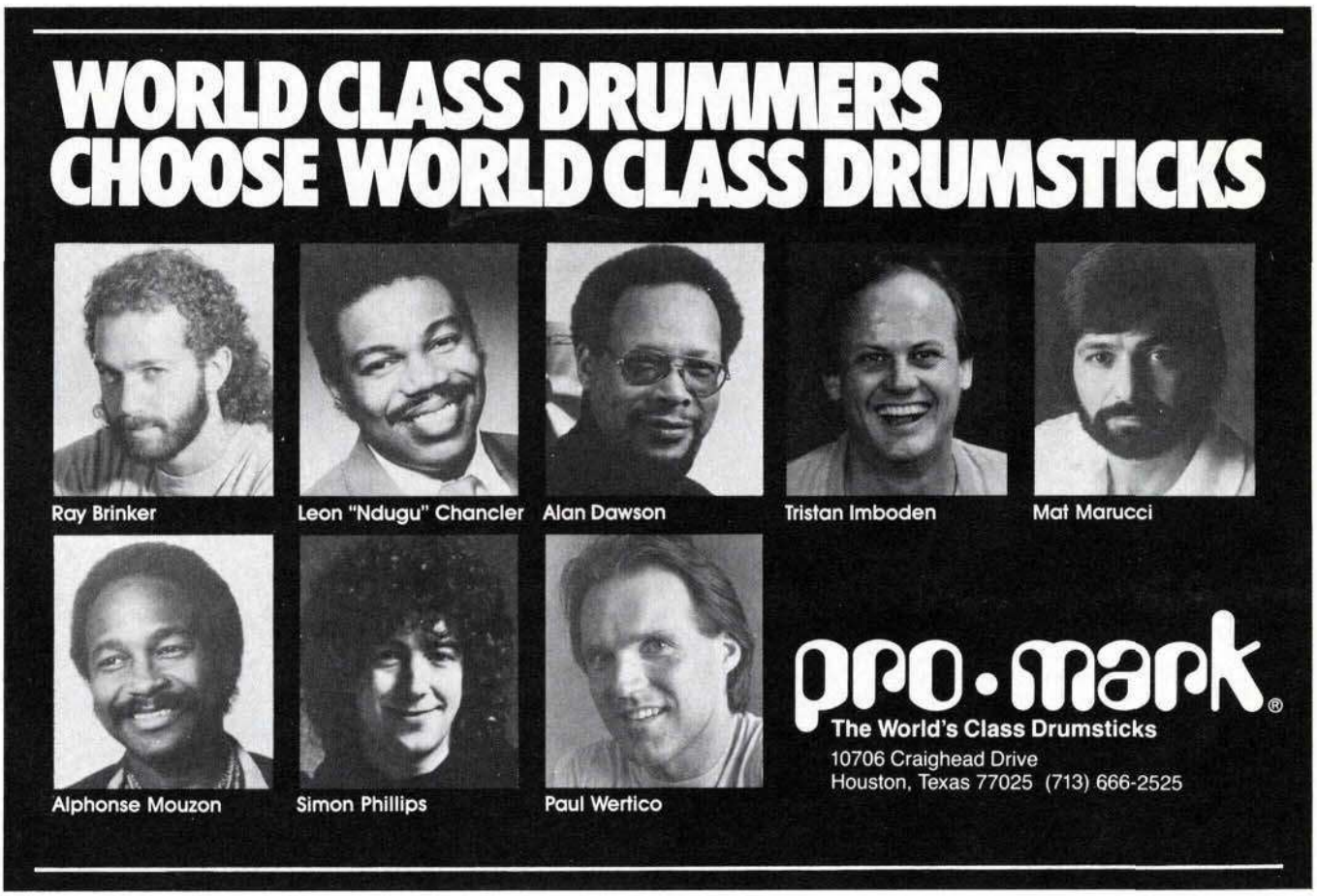
MA: I still have to work to get used to sleeping in hotels and that sort of thing, despite the number of years we've been touring. Fortunately, we can afford the better lodgings which, of course, makes life on the road a bit easier. I'm never fully relaxed when I'm on tour because I've got lots of responsibilities. For instance, I'm constantly repeating to myself, "I mustn't get ill or too out of it." I mean, I still have a drink or two and enjoy myself, but only up to a certain point. I don't stay up all night anymore. If I do, I feel it the next day. I feel inadequate. I guess that's the right word. As you get older, the road becomes a bit more taxing. Rather than doing long, drawn-out tours, I prefer to go out for two to three weeks and do festivals and that sort of thing. I don't really enjoy schlepping around colleges anymore.

RS: As a drummer, especially one in such a prominent band as the Kinks, you seem to have kept a relatively low profile over the years. Has that been intentional on your part?

MA: I think we're all pretty private people, actually. When we're not working, we're not ones to mix with show biz circles and hang out in clubs. If anything, that's what keeps us out of the public eye. Even when we're on tour, we try not to do too many interviews. It gets tiring. I get weary from it all.

RS: Have you ever done any drum clinics?

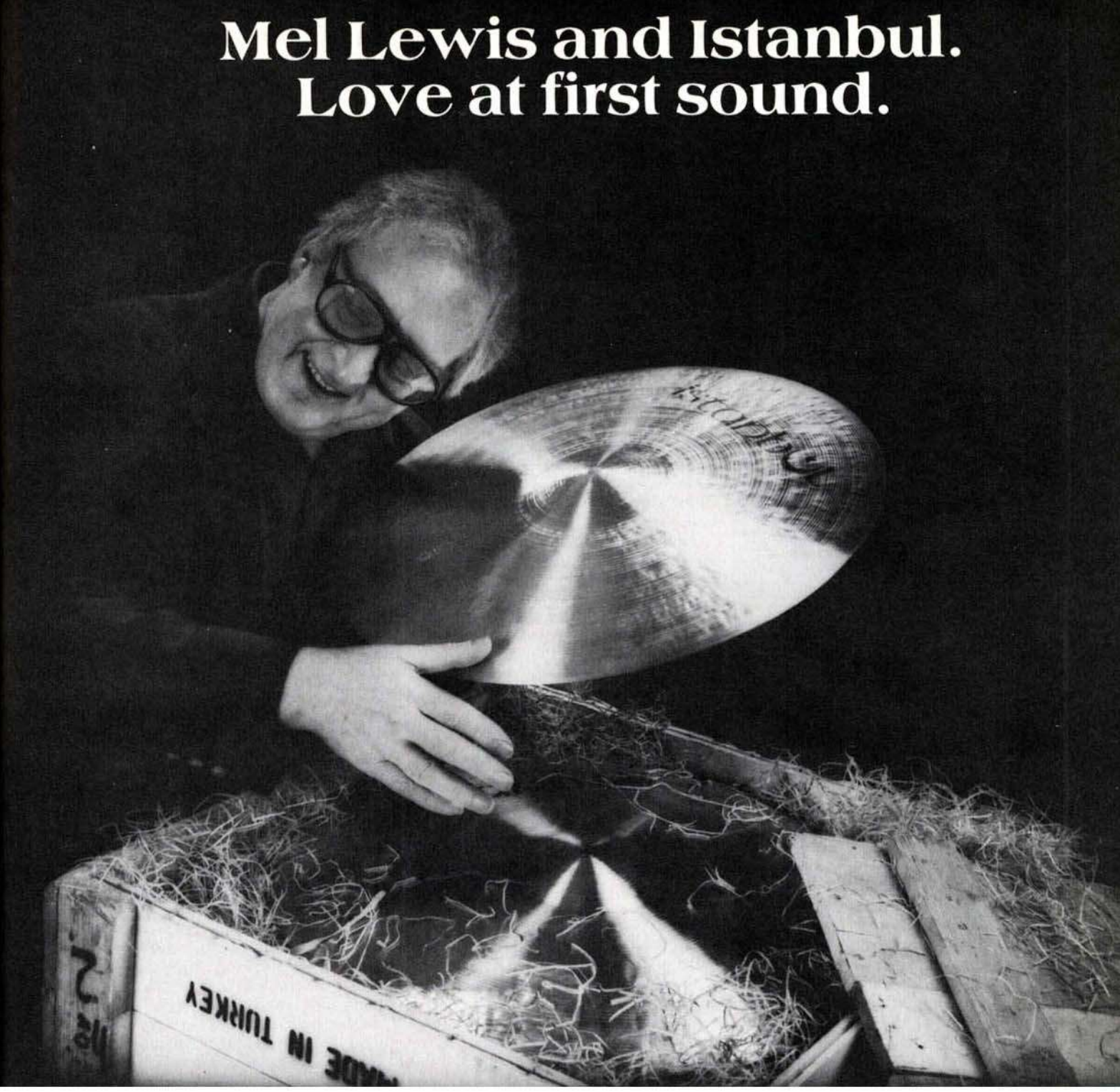
MA: No, I haven't.



RS: Do you have a desire to do any?
MA: No, because I always felt those were for the drummers who sit down and really study the drums—people who practice for hours and hours, day after day. I can't do that. I never could. It probably would make me dissatisfied if I played that much and got that good in terms of technique. I can't really use it to any advantage. Ray's not really interested in all that fancy stuff. He wants me to work within the confines of the songs he writes. So I probably would become very frustrated. I try to practice things that are going to be useful to the Kinks.
RS: You sound like a very dedicated band player.
MA: Well, I like to think of myself that way. I believe most musicians like to see themselves that way, although that might not really be the case. People always ask me if I get fed up playing the same songs all these years. In actual fact, I don't because we're constantly adding new songs to the repertoire. We'll always have to play "You Really Got Me," but we change the arrangement around every so often. A lot of what Ray has written in the last 20 years has been rather complex in terms of tempo. This has helped to keep things interesting. It's always been a challenge for me to play his songs the way they ought to be played.
RS: A lot of the kids who buy tickets to see the Kinks in concert, or who buy Kinks albums, weren't even born when "You Really Got Me" hit the charts.
MA: That's amazing isn't it? And that wasn't even the Kinks's first record.
RS: Was it "Long Tall Sally"?
MA: Yeah, but that was even before my time.
RS: You didn't play on that song?
MA: No, the group cut the record before I joined.
RS: Who played drums on the song then?
MA: Oh, they got some guy who was older than they were and who didn't want to be in the band. They tried two or three drummers who just wanted to play semi-pro.
RS: You said you turned down the Rolling Stones's offer to join their band. What made you change your mind and join the Kinks?
MA: I wanted to join a rhythm & blues band, and at the moment, the Kinks was the right one, I suppose. We met up in a pub, and I went for an audition. It seemed to work out at the time, although I don't know if it really did or not. [laughs] I never found out if I passed the audition.
RS: How much longer do you expect the Kinks to be a full-time working and touring band?
MA: I think the group can go on as long as Ray wants it to go on. The band is wrapped around his songs. As long as his writing continues to go the way it has been going, the group could go on indefinitely.
RS: And how would you feel about that?
MA: I imagine it would be okay. But I don't know. I could feel differently in a year's time or two year's time. I mean, I don't *really* want to do it forever.
RS: What would you do if the Kinks did retire? Do you have any other goals or ambitions as a musician?
MA: I don't know. I'm easily pleased playing gigs around London. I'd probably do that. I often ask myself that very same question. I think business interests would occupy most of my time, however. I don't think, though, that I'd ever give up the drums completely. I've got it in my blood, and I've been playing for too long just to get up and walk away from my kit for good.
RS: What's been the thing that you feel the best about when looking back over your career and partnership in the Kinks?
MA: Oh, that I contributed something to a winning formula and that I helped get a lot of people interested in our music. I don't dwell on that sort of thing, though. I mean, you make a record and you hope it's a hit, or a hit song comes out of it. That's what you're really thinking about. But when I reflect back sometimes, like when someone asks me a question like you just asked me, that's when I realize these things. It gives me the heart to carry on, I suppose.

When the Kinks arrived in America in November, Bob Henrit was playing drums, rather than Mick. A spokesman for the group said that Mick chose not to do this tour, but that he quite possibly would continue to record with the group.

Mel Lewis and Istanbul. Love at first sound.



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Bill

Bill Lombardo has had an interesting career already, and he hasn't hit 35 yet. Beginning in the early '60s as a rock drummer, Bill participated in the San Francisco psychedelic scene. He went on to play funk, country, and top-40 bands. He's played in clubs, on concert stages, at debutante balls and corporate functions. Along with all of that, Bill spent several years, first as drummer and later as leader, with the orchestra of his famous uncle, Guy Lombardo. Bill is now a successful bandleader/performer in his own right. In this interview, he outlines his highly diversified career, and the unique outlook on the musical profession it has given him.

BL: Being a member of the Lombardo family, I was always around music. When we lived in New York, where 1 was born, my older brother Peter was taking lessons at the school that Gene Krupa and Cozy Cole set up there. One of my early treasures is a picture signed "To Bill From Cozy" that I still have to this day. When we moved to California, my brother continued playing and 1 was always just fooling around on the drums. Every summer, I'd go back to New York to visit my father, who was Guy Lombardo's brother and played trumpet in Guy's orchestra, The Royal Canadians. One summer he had a set of drums hanging around in an attic. I was into buying 45s at the time, and I remember having Major Lance's "The Monkey Time." So I set up the drums and just started playing along to that. The rest of that summer, all my time was occupied on the drums.

I returned to San Francisco for school that year, and one day, I went to a friend's home, where a band called the Status Seekers was playing. 1 walked in, saw the drums, and it clicked in my head that I'd been playing all summer. So I just jumped on them—I didn't ask *anybody*—and started playing. Two days later, the band called me and asked if I'd like to join them. From that point on ... I have a saying now that I really have no one else to blame but myself. My falling into the drums and being into music is totally my own direction. Even though I'm from a musical family, I was never really coerced or inspired even to pick up an instrument.

RVH: About what year was this?

BL: About 1962.

RVH: So you didn't start after seeing Ringo on the *Ed Sullivan Show,* like so many other drummers of our generation?

BL: Oh no, I predate Ringo on the *Ed Sullivan Show.* I found myself playing to all kinds of records, using my brother's old kit. I just came home every day and didn't do anything else but play. I was in and out of several bands, either as drummer or lead singer, or both. I'd get into a band as a lead singer and something would happen to the drummer, so I'd go right to the drums.

RVH: Did you become a professional musician right out of high school?

BL: Exactly. And I started putting my own groups together. I can remember being really brash in those days. Anytime there was a set of drums, anyplace, I'd just go up and say, "Listen, I play the drums. Can I play with you?" I wouldn't do that now! I'd say, "My uncle is Guy Lombardo, I know what the music is about, and I'd like to play." I would be invited to debutante parties as a guest, and wind up sitting in with the entertainers. Then a friend's mother started booking bands I put together to play debutante parties opposite a bigger orchestra. Our group would provide the "young" music, and there would be an orchestra for the "adults."

RVH: So you were into the "society" aspect of playing long before your association with the Guy Lombardo orchestra?

BL: Absolutely. I started out in rock 'n' roll, but often performed alongside society bands. At that time, I was cognizant of the fact that my father was a musician with a famous orchestra, but I was so into the rock scene that I never really thought about it very much. But as I began to play for these debutante parties, I started to see how it worked with the bigger bands. It was also about this time that I started checking out the club scene as a pro.

RVH: Were you part of the San Francisco "psychedelic scene" in the mid-'60s?

BL: Yes. I did a lot of playing at the Haight Theatre in Haight-Ashbury. My band—called Pyewacket—played at free concerts in the park with Jefferson Airplane. We worked with Moby Grape, Buffalo Springfield and Spirit, too. We eventually ended up playing at Fillmore West, opening a show for Lee Michaels; that was sort of the pinnacle of our participation in the "San Francisco Era." We actually did wrangle a record contract from Columbia, but at the last minute, our contact there changed positions and the thing kind of fell through. I continued playing in the San Francisco area for the next three years, until I had a call to join the Guy Lombardo orchestra. In that three-year period, I decided that music was what I was going to do as a career. I became more aware of my association with the Lombardo family—not for their type of music but the heritage of being in the music business. So I really wanted to find out what *I* was doing. There were things that I had heard that I wanted to do, so I decided to take lessons. In '69 or '70, I studied with Gene Bardolli at Kenny Williams' Drumland in San Francisco. Then I heard about a teacher named Chuck Brown, who is really the guy that I think about almost every day of my life, as far as helping me with the drums. At the time, I had decided that I wanted to go to the Berklee School of Music. Chuck had a most beautiful teaching technique, and things became crystal clear for me. I was ready for Berklee and had been accepted.

But at that point, my dad called me and said, "Our drummer is retiring. Would you like to play drums with us?" I told him, "Well, I've been accepted at Berklee for the fall, so I'm not sure that I want to take the gig." He suggested I come back to Long Island, where they did a big outdoor gig at Jones Beach. So I told him I'd play for the summer. Then I went back to Chuck and told him about the gig. He showed me a couple of rhumba beats, and I'd been working with brushes and basic jazz time anyway. So I went back and played with the Guy Lombardo Royal

by Rick Van Horn

Lombardo

Canadians, and pretty much stepped all over the place when I first got with them. It was a little difficult at first.

RVH: You went directly from playing San Francisco rock 'n' roll to the Guy Lombardo orchestra?

BL: Cold turkey.

RVH: What prompted your father to call *you* for the gig in the first place?

BL: Two years earlier, I had been visiting my father, and he had a piano player over. There was a snare there, and all of a sudden my father asked me to play. I became very paranoid about playing for my father and this piano player. Anyway, the guy was playing a Dixieland piano, and we had a little jam session. Two years later, when my dad asked me to play drums for the orchestra, I said, "Gee, I've been playing all this rock 'n' roll. Do you think I'll be able to do the orchestra thing?" My father replied, "I heard you play two years ago, and I could tell right away that you had a beat. I wouldn't ask you if I didn't think you could do it." The Lombardo thing was always the beat. My dad used to claim that most drummers had a bass drum only to mount cymbals on—that they never really used the bass drum for what it was for. Of course, the Royal Canadians' music was steeped in the tradition of the '20s, where everything was very simple. Anyway, I went back, played and had enough command of the instrument to be able to listen to what my dad told me (he sat right next to me playing first trumpet), and to listen to Guy and cut the gig. Then they offered me the big money to go on the road in September, and I opted to do that instead of going to Berklee. So I never made it there.

RVH: So what was it like to drum for Guy Lombardo?

BL: Well, the big joke within the Guy Lombardo orchestra is always that you don't know the drummer is there until the end of the song where he punches the little signature phrase: "Boom-chick, boom-chick . . . boom-pa-boom-chick." That was the ending that they claim to have invented. There is also a story about a recording session where George Gowans, the original drummer, was late. Guy started the session anyway, and George walked in just in time to go "splash" at the end of the song. Guy never knew the difference. George wasn't even on the first cut of the record. These are jokes that used to circulate within the band. My father always used to tell me that the drummer takes the beat from the bass player . . . and they were a tuba band! So you're talking about a very specialized type of music, where the drummer was to be felt and not heard. The main emphasis of the beat really came from the tuba—that "poomp . . . poomp . . . poomp"—and the bass drum would kind of melt into that. There was no syncopation at all, and just a light backbeat. That's not to say that they didn't do up-tempo things, but it was strictly beat. They did a couple of "rock" songs—like "Winchester Cathedral"—in their own inimitable style. That's where I'd say, "Okay, this is where I'm going to shine." I'd start playing a syncopated bass drum and a heavy backbeat. All the heads would just kind of turn in the band. In *their* style of rock, it was still just 8th-note rhythm and the light backbeat. I was trying a lot of different things, but I slowly learned to do what was called for, because there were a lot of musicians on the band who were steeped in jazz and Dixieland, and they really opened my ears quite a bit. It was one of the first real growth things for me—trying to listen to a sound and be able to adapt to it. That's really why I took the job in the first place—because it was a challenge.

RVH: It was a chance to research history right on the gig.

BL: Absolutely. I was only 21 then, and a lot of the older guys shrunk my head a lot. We had many all-night sessions in the rooms, talking and listening to music. They really wanted to help me and give it to me straight.

RVH: How long did you stay on the band?

BL: Through the '71-'72 tour, including the network TV broadcast on New Year's Eve. Then I left the band and went back to San Francisco. My wife had a baby, and I wanted to stay home for a while. I continued working in clubs there, but doing it a little more aggressively in terms of career advancement. I was beginning to get more into the business end of it all.

I did go back with the Royal Canadians one more time for a period of about a year, when there wasn't much happening at home. I thought I'd give it another try. I left again in '72 or '73, returned to San Francisco and got into a band doing R&B cover material. I was studying again and working on the funk things to get that good R&B sound. Then one day, a guy came along and said, "We need a drummer for this country band in Mill Valley." So I went over and discovered that it was very easy. Playing had always been *fun,* but the kind of music we were doing in the R&B band wasn't quite as *easy* as this country thing seemed to be. I rehearsed with the band, and we did the gig that night. All of a sudden, I was playing in a club where people were going "Wa-Hoo," clapping their hands, and really getting into the spirit of the thing we were doing. I was just amazed at how it brought my playing into a different vein; I got a lot simpler. Up until that point, I had been trying to be more complicated, and I was probably trying to make things more difficult than they should have been.

At any rate, the bandleader liked the way I played and offered me the gig. He had more dates that paid better than the band I was in, and the music was fun, so I took the gig. I found it interesting that it sort of reiterated the old Guy Lombardo thing about the beat. I'm more of a groove drummer than a Buddy Rich-style drummer; I'm into keeping things simple and being the conduit for the rest of the band. If I can make it simple for them, that's what I figure my job is. That's what country music had for me: strictly beat—*hot* beat. So I got on the country bandwagon from '73 to '75. Then I got into another club band that was doing primarily pop music, playing with a bass player named Rod Ellicot. Rod had been a member of Cold Blood for several years and was one of San Francisco's top players. He opened my ears up tremendously. I really respected him and what he had done. I played with that group until I got the call to come back and *lead* the Royal Canadians when Guy died in 1978.

RVH: Did you lead from the drums?

BL: No, I was fronting. I had always been a singer, so at that point, after playing drums with the Royal Canadians twice, I had the desire to be up front. Whether my father knew that at the time, I don't know, but he did know that I had been studying voice. He told me, "You're the obvious choice; you know the band in and out, you've played drums with us, you saw Uncle Guy work and you know what needs to be done. And people are still asking for you." I was desirous of making it in the music business and not closing any doors, but I still had to think about it. It scared me, because I didn't want to be labeled as this or that. But my experiences had been pretty varied already, and I'm obstinate enough not to let anything tie me down too much, so I said I'd do it. I got a shot at not only leading the orchestra, but singing

with them also.

RVH: Besides singing, what did leading entail?

BL: Emceeing, choosing the material, and digging up some of the old arrangements that weren't often done. The band had gotten to a point where they *had* to do this song or that song; you always have to do a few songs that people expect. But I saw a chance to really dig into the band's library—which is extensive—and to get some of those vintage arrangements. They have some Dixieland charts from the '30s that are just beautiful, laid-back-but-swinging arrangements. So I brought some of those back to light.

I led the band for two years. My biggest thrill as a leader was the '78-'79 New Year's Eve broadcast on CBS. CBS was doing the show live from the Waldorf, and I wasn't just the drummer this time. I was the leader, out in front, emceeing the band. It really felt good. But then the next year, CBS dropped the show! So I put a show together. I opened up on the drums doing "South Rampart Street Parade," and then went out front. We sold the package to a TV syndication group, and it did well on the '79-'80 New Year's Eve broadcast they produced.

But then I started looking ahead. 1980 was starting, and I had to figure out if I wanted to be showcasing the Royal Canadians the rest of my life. My father was getting ready to retire. Also, the organization that held the lease on the band wanted me to take it over, and be responsible for booking the band, the transportation, and all that. 1 figured that was a good time for me to get out, because I had other ideas of what I wanted to do. I wanted to bring my own career more to the forefront, and explore more of what 1 could do musically, after all these years of studying drums and voice in all the different styles that I'd been in.

So I left the orchestra in 1980, and had a sort of backlash period where I just wanted to get back into the clubs and bang on the drums for four hours. I did that for a while, but soon saw that I was not really going anyplace. I had to face the question of "What do you do after doing a show on CBS, New Year's Eve, from the Waldorf, televised around the world?" I mean, where do you go from there? So I put a band together and started approaching other markets. I figured that if 1 got into the corporate and society scene, I could make a decent living. I had a concept of doing music from everything I'd been exposed to—from the '20s right up to the current day. I finally put together a roster of people that I had played with, started approaching different corporations and people like that and started bringing that sort of tight, club-band sound to them. I started doing parties for *People* Magazine, Rockefeller Inc., Estee Lauder—a lot of corporate work. That's where I am now. I'm not doing clubs anymore.

RVH: So at this moment, you are a contemporary society performer. But these aren't casuals like a backyard pool party or the local VFW dinner dance.

BL: Right. The New York area is heavy with corporate gigs, major social functions, weddings and things like that—the money jobs. I'm trying to cut out a career for myself. I'm flying out to San Diego next year to do a job for the American Cancer Society. As a leader, it's my business to find the good-paying jobs and keep the bookings steady. It's doing reasonably well. It's not great, but it's a lot more than I'd be doing in clubs. I also teach on the side. I've got a good name, I've worked hard, and I work a lot.

RVH: Having been both the drummer behind a leader and the leader in front of a drummer, how do you relate to the drummers on your bands? Are you a little harder on them because you know what should happen, or easier because you've been there and can appreciate a drummer's problems?

BL: I think I'm a little bit of both; I think I relate very well to my drummers. As a drummer, I know what it's like to have people turn around and beat time in the air, or say they want more or less of something. As a leader, I have a very distinct idea of how I want things to go, and I can tell when a drummer is playing too much. One thing that I think was a good aspect about my own drumming career was the fact that I was also a singer, and I always was able to play very well for bands that had singers, because I knew when and when not to play. Of course, this came after many years of being yelled at: "The roll *doesn't* go there!" I try to be easy on drummers who play with me, yet at the same time, I'm very specific about what I want. I try not to come off sounding egotistical when I'm talking to a drummer, but I'll try to show that I know where it's at. A lot of drummers feel that, once they get the time thing down, they can start throwing in embellishments just to keep themselves interested. In jazz that's fine, but in a lot of dance music, or where there is any kind of a vocal thing going, you've got to know when, and when not, to play. That's the biggest problem I run across with drummers, because a lot of them are jazz and free-lance players who are into a lot of different types of music.

RVH: Do you miss drumming behind the band now that you're out front?

BL: I haven't forsaken the drums. In future special shows, I'll probably do something on the drums, as well as fronting the band.

I also think that being a drummer has helped me in being a vocalist too. I sing more rhythmically. A lot of great vocalists are or were drummers, from Mel Torme to Phil Collins.

RVH: Do you have a particular philosophy when it comes to achieving success in the music business?

BL: We're all given a certain amount of gifts, and the one thing that I'd like to pass on, as it was impressed on me, is that if you work for it, you can reach your goal. It doesn't have to be on an arena concert stage or on the cover of every magazine. It just needs to be utilizing your talents and not wasting them—not getting caught up in a lot of things that could sap your energy. If I can be any kind of example that helps other people, I'm really happy.

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Reader's Platform continued from page 4

PLAYER WAR

I would like to make a general comment regarding a large number of the *Modern Drummer* interviews I've read. Everybody's opinion has a value, and everyone has a right to express it. However, the one thing that bothers me is the "war" between technical and non-technical players.

Whether you're playing something incredibly technical, or swinging the same, simple beat for three minutes, depends on your musical situation. If either situation is played with sincerity and 100% of your heart and soul, how can you lose?

Paul Buhl
Boston, MA

THANKS TO ROY AND NEIL

I would like to thank Roy Burns for telling readers that Neil Peart is only human in the November '84 *MD.* Some people are getting bad impressions of Neil without ever meeting him. 1 caught up with Neil at his hotel the day before his concert on June 10th. He smiled, signed two autographs, patted me on the back and said, "You're welcome," after my word of thanks. That was it, and that was plenty. People who expect more, expect too much.

Bill Sons
Dallas, TX

COMMENTS ON CHROMING

Editorial comments referring to "lower-grade chroming," along with ads stating, "triple chrome-plated hardware" have me writing to offer some possible clarification. Should an item come out of the chroming tank defective, it is usually *very* obvious. Either the chemical balance was off, or the tank had some foreign matter in it, or whatever, and usually the part will be thrown out. Should an attempt be made to re-plate the part, the previous chrome must be *stripped off* chemically; you cannot triple chrome, or even double.

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Defects appearing on chromed hardware are really very rarely the result of a problem in the plating process. What appears as low-grade plating usually signifies that little or no preparation time was spent on the parts. Using high-speed buffing wheels and polishing compounds, we work on our parts to have them shine like they have been plated *before* they even go to the plating shop.

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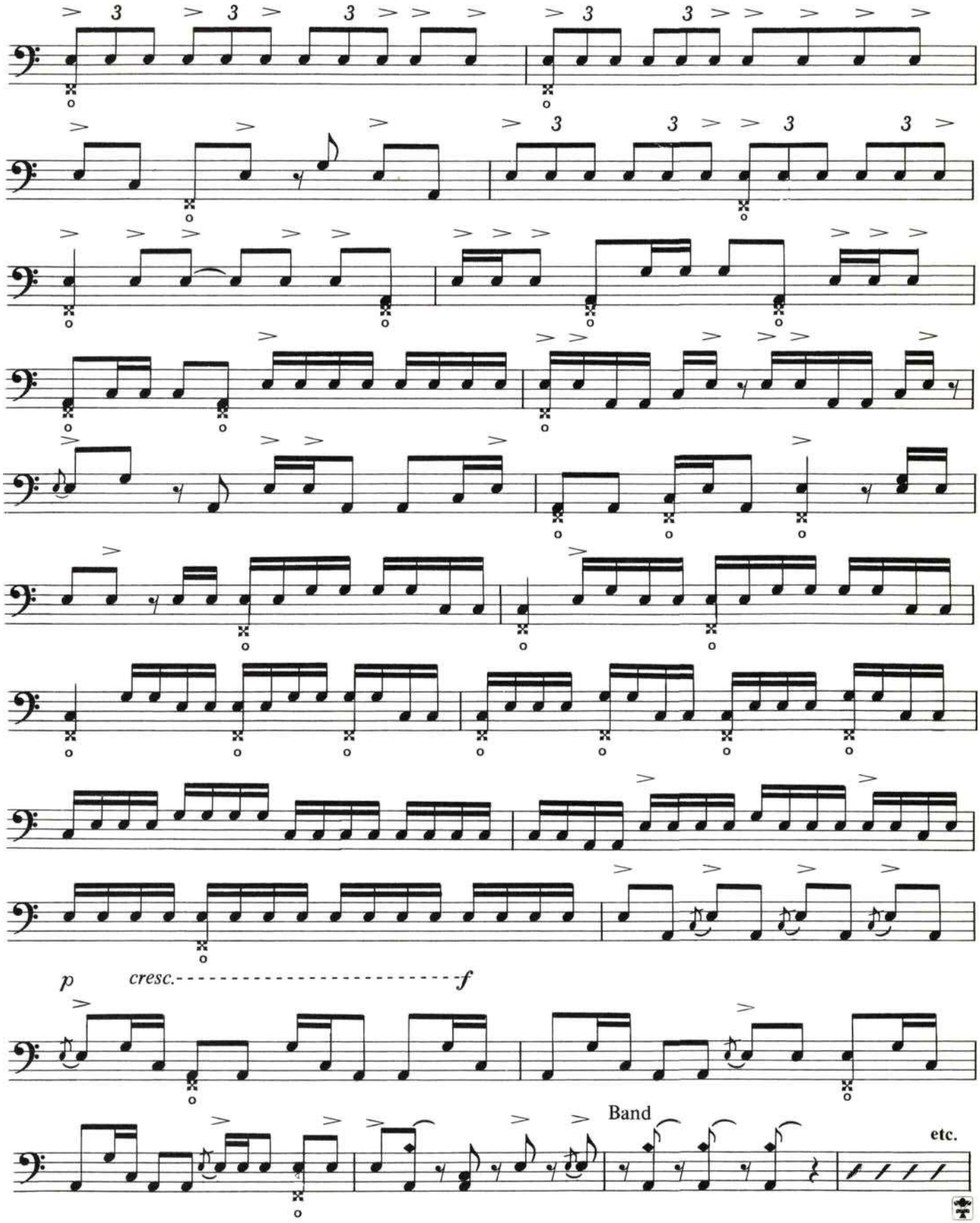
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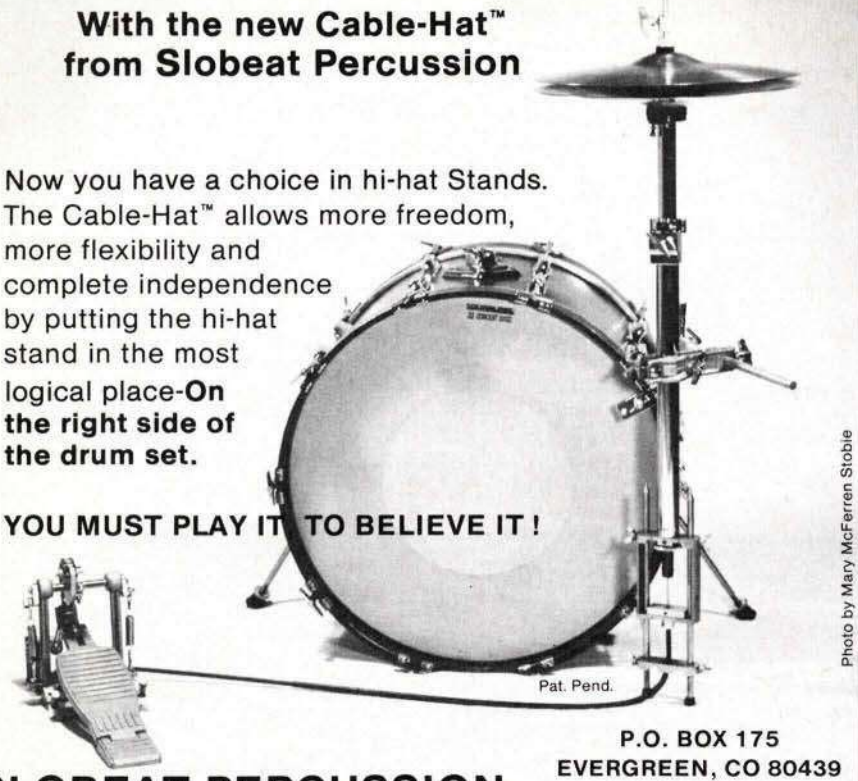

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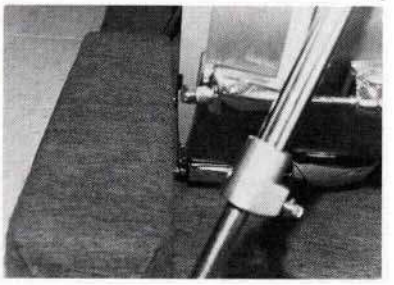

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Inside Meinl continued from page 25

number on it, and we can reproduce it. This is important, because I personally think that it makes no sense for some important endorsers to have their dream cymbals when nobody can share the dream because the cymbals can only be made one time.

DQ: That's a pretty unique design philosophy.

RM: Speaking of "design," let me tell you something that happened recently. We had an advertisement in Germany for the Meinl *Laser* cymbal, and our slogan was, "Sound Design." After we came out with this advertisement, another manufacturer sent out a letter to the dealers in Germany, saying, "Sound is not made by design." And now, after one year, we see an ad from the same company saying, "Designed to work!" Actually, any cymbal genuinely *is* designed, because any shape is designed; it's not done by accident. We really design everything about our cymbals, because it's very hard to change that balance I spoke of. Whatever you do at any point of a cymbal reflects on all of it. This means that you can't change just one part and leave the others the same; if you change anything it creates a lot of changes generally.

DQ: So you can't just say, "I want a little more sustain so let's increase the bell size"?

RM: No, because that reflects on every other sound quality of the cymbal.

DQ: So that's where the design element comes in—knowing not only what's going to happen to the bell's performance if you change the bell, but how it will relate to everything else.

RM: Yes. So we come to a very important point. I personally almost hate the word "tradition," because I found out that for many companies, tradition is like poison. There is no reason for me to say, "My father made it like this, and I'm going to continue to make it that way because he did." I certainly wouldn't want to do it the way my grandfather did, because he lived in another time. Why should I stick with tradition just as a law?

DQ: Suppose a drummer buys a Meinl cymbal, and ten years from now wants to buy another just like it. According to my impression, ten years into the future you're likely to have a totally new line of cymbals tailored to that particular time. If our drummer wants a cymbal just like the ten-year-old one, is one going to be available?

RM: Yes, because we can reproduce those things.

DQ: But suppose our drummer doesn't have one to bring to you, because it was cracked. Will there be a line available in 1995 to satisfy that drummer's desires?

RM: This is a good question. In some way what you suggest presents a conflict of interest, because although I think it's important to show a good line, so that everybody has his or her choice, I also

think it's very bad for the consumer if a company builds up *too* big a line. When you have a very big line with too many ranges and types of cymbals, this means that most of the dealers are never able to carry the whole line. It's easy for the dealers to carry the whole Meinl range; it costs them such a small amount of money that they can have it in stock all the time. I think that's a very positive aspect, because it's not very good to have to purchase cymbals through a catalog. But even then, it's easier with our cymbals than with some other brands, because we try to keep a very consistent sound quality from model to model.

DQ: In that regard you're closer to the Paiste philosophy than the Zildjian.

RM: Yes, and we think this philosophy is good. In Europe, nowadays, more and more people understand this philosophy and like it.

DQ: Some drummers favor Paiste because they can replace broken cymbals anywhere in the world with similar models and be assured of a very close sound match.

RM: That's very important. If you consider other musical instruments, do you think it would be good if you had ten different guitars in the same model from the same maker, and all ten sounded different, or if you had ten Remo heads in the same size and weight, and each head sounded different? Because of the way traditional cymbals are produced, those cymbals are each different, and this weak point is promoted so people will believe it is a good point. It's easier for them to make each cymbal different than to make them all consistent. Because of our modern production methods, for us it would be harder to make them each different. We are not for people who want cymbals that exist only one time in the world.

DQ: I'd like to direct my next question to cymbal designer Wolfgang Wunder. I notice that the conspicuous difference between *Profile* cymbals and most other lines is that you have smaller, flatter bells than they do. What is the reasoning for this?

WW: It's one way in which we can separate the bell sound from the rest of the cymbal. It makes the bell sound stand out from the normal overall sound of the cymbal. With our bell, you get purely the bell of the cymbal when you strike it, whereas with the other cymbals you get a sound much more similar to the sound of the entire cymbal when struck on the shoulder.

DQ: That design carries through pretty much throughout the whole *Profile* line. I'm very surprised to see the 16" crash with not only a flat, but a very small bell. From my understanding of the science of a cymbal, the bigger the bell, the more the sustain and the longer the decay. I would assume that a 16" *Profile,* with its small, flat bell, would crash and then die very quickly.

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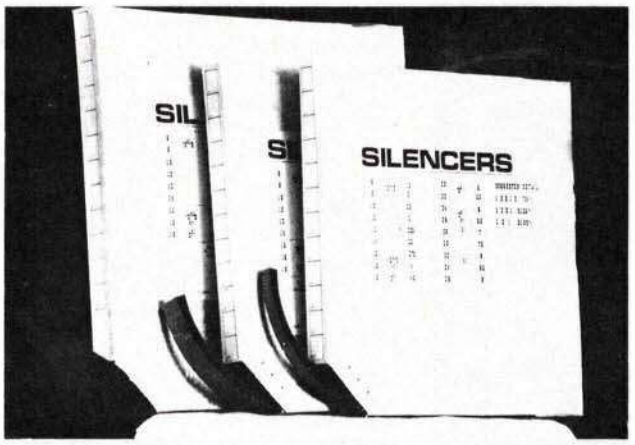

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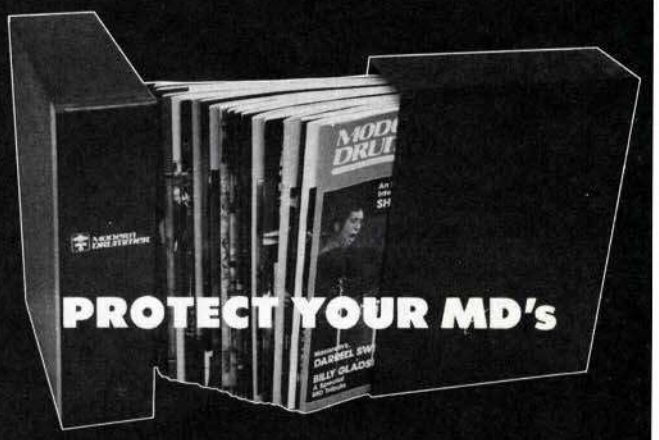

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WW: That's true. The philosophy of the *Profile* line is sound composition. The *Hi-Tech, Rock Velvet,* and *Volcanic Rock* models are like a three-tone composition. *Hi-Tech* is a low, warm, jazzy, dark sound. It's sensitive to all frequencies, and the bell is low. The *Rock Velvet* is in the middle range, without so many frequencies. The bell is higher pitched, and the sound is straighter. The *Volcanic Rock* is higher in overall pitch, higher in "ping," and the bell is much higher, with very little build-up. It's a very dry sound. If you compare three cymbals in the same size, one from each line, you get the very clear high-middle-low, three-tone composition I spoke of. The same thing applies both in rides and crashes. The *Hi-Tech* crash is sensitive, with a middle frequency band, a fast attack and quick decay, and a low pitch. You can even use an 18" crash as a jazzy sort of ride cymbal. The *Rock Velvet's* shoulder gives a higher pitch than that of the *Hi-Tech;* the crash is straighter and sustains a little longer. The *Volcanic Rock* is much higher, with a louder sound that sustains much longer.

The three-tone concept applies either in a combination of sizes in the same line, or a combination of lines in the same sizes. For example, if you used three 18" crashes, one from each of the three lines, you'd hear the same high-middle-low composition that you would hear if you used 16", 17" and 18" crashes from the same line. What this means is, drummers who need cymbals with a certain length of decay, but want them to sound different in pitch, can choose the same size cymbals, one from each line, and get a good variety of tones, with a pretty consistent decay. On the other hand, drummers who particularly like the tonal qualities of one line can choose different sizes in that one line and get the same high-middle-low tonal composition, along with a good variety of sustain lengths.

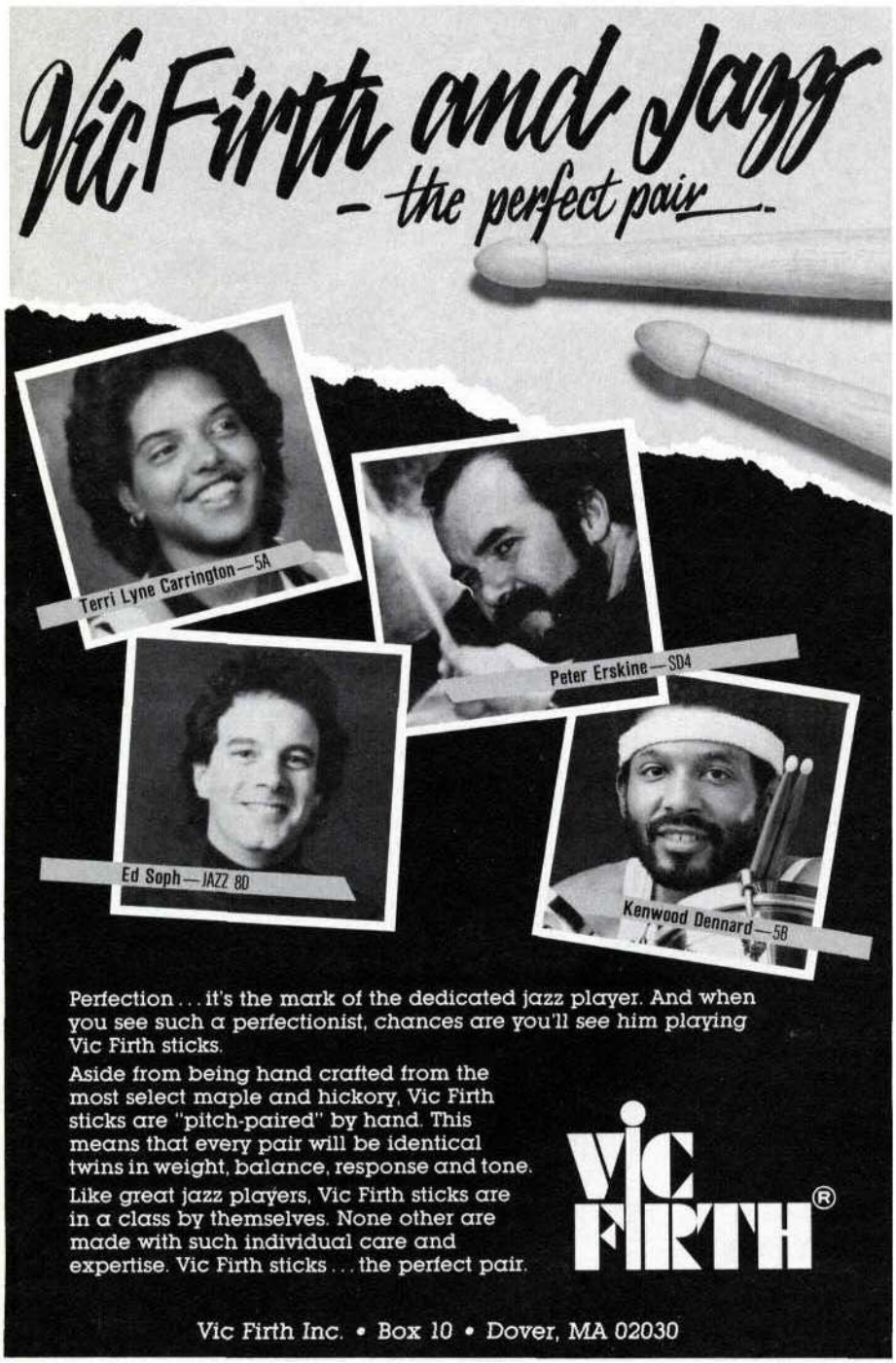
RM: What we want to use in the future is a slogan that says "Family of Sounds" for the whole *Profile* line, because it's a family. You can combine nearly any cymbal with any other from the *Profile* line, and it's easy for the drummer to make a choice. We think we offer enough choices, but not too many. Too many choices would be confusing; two choices would not be enough. We feel that we can satisfy most of the demand with three models.

DQ: You mentioned that you've been doing a great deal of field research with drummers who play electronic kits. Are you thinking in terms of trying to represent yourself as the "electronic drummer's cymbal," or a specialty cymbal in any way?

RM: No, not really; we just want to create a modern cymbal. It's not as if people who buy our cymbals can play just on a Simmons drumkit. Many of the people that we've met say, "We are looking for something new and modern."

DQ: When I first spoke to some of the Meinl representatives in the U.S., they stressed how well the cymbals worked in the context of today's heavily synthesized, heavily amplified, and generally heavily electronic music. Can you tell me what it is about the Meinl cymbals that makes them so compatible with that?

RM: Well, it's hard to explain, but I do know one thing. Before we decided to go on with the present models in the *Profile* line, we ran hundreds of different cymbals, and gave them to drummer friends to try. They returned them with their comments written on the cymbals. We found out many interesting things—many important, fundamental things—like how a bell should be. Most of the people were not satisfied with the bell sound of the ride cymbal; they had problems with the cymbal building up too much and too fast, so you couldn't hear the "ping" of the ride. Many people had problems if they made a combination of their cymbals; it was hard to find an additional or replacement cymbal



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inside the same range so there was a balance with their others.

DQ: An ensemble sound.

RM: Yes. We also analyzed any cymbal for its qualities as a ride, splash, crash or hi-hat in different kinds of music. We found out many fundamental things, and tried to put them into our cymbals. Nowadays, many drummers buy a Meinl ride cymbal just because the bell is unique. For others the bell is not so important, but they like the ride because it doesn't build up so much and they hear the clear "ping." We really analyzed these things, and the good thing was that we had no tradition; we started from zero. We tried anything and everything.

Sometimes it was difficult. If a drummer likes something, very often the problem is that the drummer can't say what he or she feels. Drummers will say, "Ummm, well . . . you know what I mean . . . ,"and we *don't* know. Everybody uses a different method of describing cymbal sounds. I speak German and a little English, but I don't speak "Cymbalese." Let me give you an example from a letter we received from a very good American drummer for whom we made two different cymbals to try: "This cymbal is not too far away, but lacks a 'whoosh' ... It has a larger sound ... a little aggressive . . . has a nice attack and will probably cut. I'm missing a full-bodied sense; the cymbal does not spread out after it reaches its pinnacle. It does not have an umbrella effect; the sound is one-dimensional . . . ." [laughs] You know, I had to read that five times!

DQ: I probably would too. I don't have the vaguest idea of what an "umbrella effect" is.

RM: Well, he sent in a couple of tapes with his comments, and we also worked from those. But I don't think that we'll ever understand anyone's desires 100%, because so much of it is*feeling*. We tried to make a set of cymbals which combined the positive things he said, and eliminated the negative. Now he's been playing them in concert for two or three weeks, and we'll be very interested in his response.

DQ: That brings us to the subject of endorsers. What is your attitude regarding an endorser program?

RM: Let me put it this way: What fascinates us about this connection with the particular American drummer I mentioned is that he has ideas which nobody could realize for him up until now. We really wanted to realize what he feels and what he wants. Whether we get him as an

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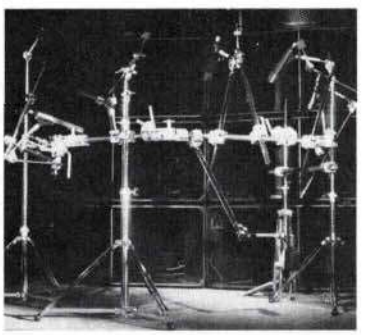

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endorser or not makes no difference; it's a proof to ourselves that we can do something that the others couldn't do for him. That's the kind of connection we'd *like* to have with drummers. We don't want to get endorsers because they get something from us, and we don't want to spend any money to get drummers; we have a bad feeling about that. We are looking for qualified drummers who have something to give *us,* and from whom we can learn. Whether they are young or old makes no difference; we want their experience and their ideas. We want to have a good relationship with the drummers, and not only via the advertisements. We don't need hundreds of endorsers; if we have two or three dozen qualified people—even if they're not the best known in the world—it's enough for us. We don't compete with the other companies here either, so nobody needs to be afraid that we'll come tomorrow and take all of their endorsers; we don't want to do that.

1 think something that should be written clearly is our main policy: We are making cymbals *for* the consumer, and *together* with famous drummers and endorsers; we don't work *for* the endorsers. We try to make it right for the consumer.

DQ: You made a point earlier that I'd like to touch on again. You see an advantage to the consumer in your staying with a smaller range of models.

RM: I feel it's very important. For example, in some previous lines we made 15" hi-hats. We found out that we could sell them to the distributors, who could sell them to the dealers, but from there, nobody bought them. The result of situations like this is that, if people come in to buy a pair of hi-hat cymbals and the dealer has an overstock of 15" hi-hats, the dealer will sell them 15" hi-hats that are not really good for them. So in the end, the consumers get cymbals they didn't ask for and that they don't like simply because the dealer had an overstock. So we only produce cymbals that the people request. If there is a yearly demand, in the whole world, for only 50 of something, we won't make it. I think when you see the catalogs from other cymbal companies, and see what their endorsers are very often playing, you'll see sizes and models that wouldn't sell; they're just for the endorsers because the endorsers can get them free of charge. The same endorsers wouldn't buy it in a shop. Who needs a 26" China cymbal, or a 15" heavy ride, or a 24" thin crash? We make highly requested products which the people need.

Let me tell you another story. Gerry Evans, our International Sales Representative, was at a big, heavy metal concert in England this past summer, helping a German drummer with some drums. There were many staff people from famous cymbal companies, who took care of the five or six drummers on this concert. On the other side of the stage, there were 30,000 people, but nobody took care of *them.* Have you ever looked at it that way? Those staff people were putting all their energy into five or six people, to make them play their cymbals so that the people can see it. Nobody did anything for the 30,000 people out front. Of course, what can you do? But you get a feeling from this, and so our idea is that we are here to work for the consumers, because they pay for the instrument and we all live from them.

DQ: You've repeatedly mentioned your modern operation, including your computer-assisted manufacturing methods. Could you give a brief description of your production line—a verbal "factory tour"?

RM: Yes. To begin with, any kind of data or information that we use is stored on computer, including things like metal purchasing, invoices, etc.

DQ: Does this same computer store manufacturing information, and control the machinery that makes the cymbals?

RM: The computer is mainly involved in controlling the machine that does the hammering. That's the process that makes the final shape and sound of the cymbal, and of course, every other cymbal maker knows that, so I'm not telling any secrets. What we do keep secret is *how* our computer controls the hammering process, and what exactly that process is. We could

adapt our computer to any of the machine processes, but sometimes the personal feeling is more important, so for many of the operations we need human operators. For example, the lathe operators work from a template, which was created, in turn, from the specifications in our computer. But they also give each cymbal a certain personal attention, so there is a machine-plus-human element involved.

The *Profile* cymbals are shaped in a different manner than our less expensive lines. There is a big 300-ton press, and we heat the cymbal sheet and press the bell into it, like the other cymbal companies do it. This is also no secret. You must determine the right shape of the bell, and know how much heat to apply to the metal for how long before you press it. That is developed through experience. Aside from the initial shaping, the buffing, lathing, lacquering and other finishing processes for the *Profile* cymbals are the same as for all the other lines we make. We have a very good technology that is clean, smooth and fast, so we have no reason to change it. The main difference is in the basic material, and the hammering process.

Our cymbals are also specially treated with heat, for the benefit of the sound. We need a very specific temperature and time, depending on the metal. Brass and nickel-silver cymbals are very different from bronze, and require different treatments. We've done extensive research into the time and temperature that is best for each type of cymbal.

After final finishing, we have different ways of putting the name on the cymbals. Some are done by hand, with a silk-screen process. The reason why we silk-screen our logo and the cymbal type on the cymbal, rather than stamping them into the metal itself, is to avoid damaging the cymbal. When you hammer a logo with a metal stamp, it puts tremendous pressure at one very limited point on the cymbal, and you risk affecting the sound or cracking the cymbal. We're working now on a different method of engraving our name, the model information and a serial number into the metal, without damaging the cymbal in any way.

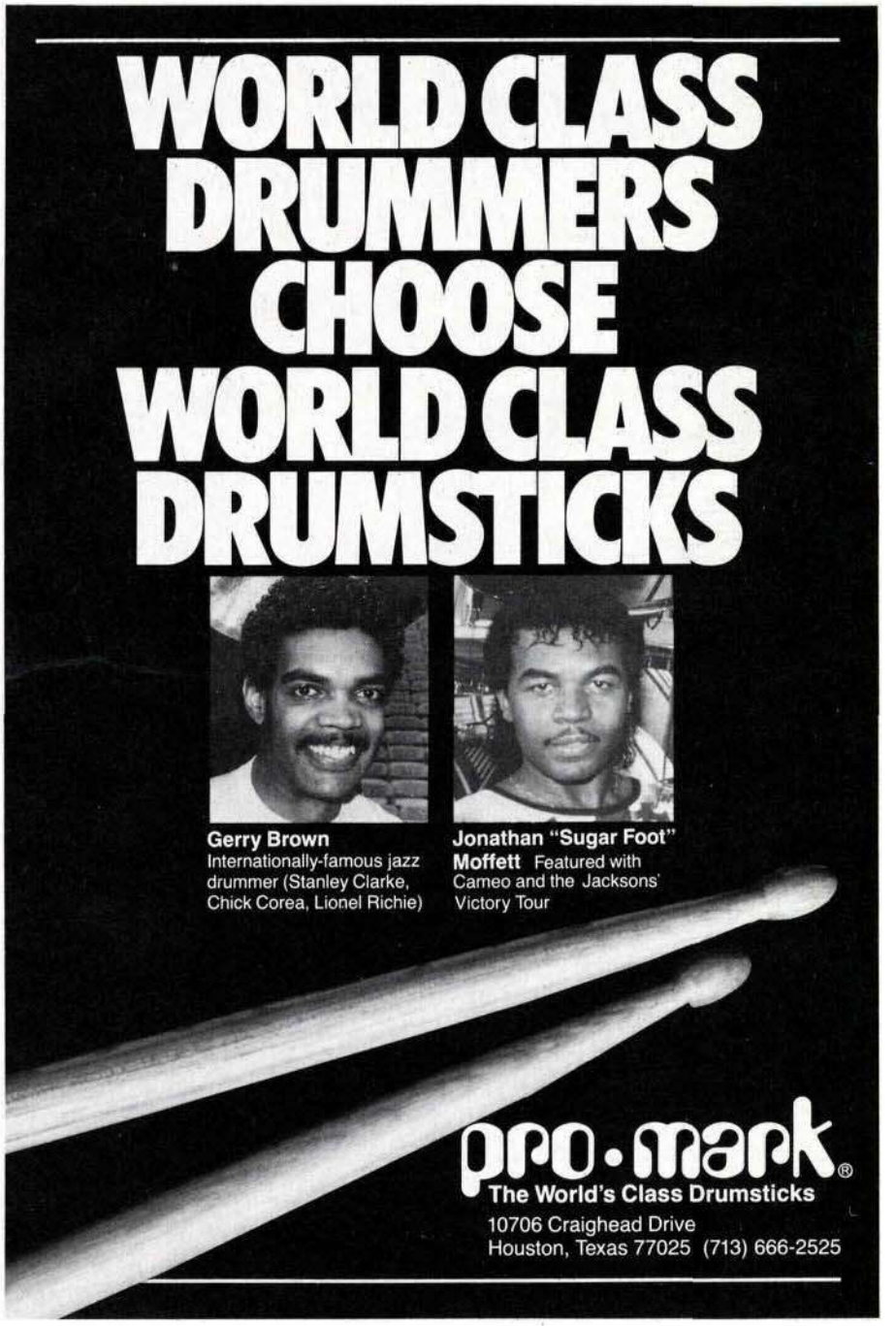
The *Profile* logo is done by a machine, which we had to design ourselves. It involves a three-color process that requires the cymbal to be aligned perfectly three different times. A machine was called for because of its precision; we must have that for the *Profile* cymbals. Right now the *Profile* line is a very small part of our production, and we want to keep it that way. We don't want to expand the production too rapidly because we don't want to have any quality-control problems.

DQ: You've stressed consistency and quality control. How do you maintain that?

RM: We do a line of cymbals—not five or ten, but a whole lot. Then we check each one on a very precise digital scale. In that way we know, because of the way each cymbal is made, that they are identical, as much as they can be. We're checking tolerances within thousandths of grams. This is the best control, better than any ear. If we were to have a person testing cymbals one by one to see if the sound agrees, after 200 cymbals that person could never hear the differences. So we decided to use this method, which is very much more reliable. If one of the cymbals is irregular in terms of weight or thickness, we take it out and either correct the problem—if possible—or send it back to be re-melted.

Our inspectors are very strict, and any cymbal that is not perfect gets sent back to the line. If there are imperfections in the lacquer, scratches, or other cosmetic things, the cymbal is sent back and we finish it again. Some cymbals are really so defective that we send them back to the metal supplier. Of course, they charge us for the original molding, and so we lose a little money, but we give them the metal again and they start over with it.

In '81 and the first half of '82, a large part of our production was devoted to building up stock. But in the middle of '82 we improved the quality of all of our cymbals. So we decided at the end of '82 to send something like 30 to 40 *thousand* new



cymbals of the previous quality line back to be melted down, remolded to our new specifications and sent to us again. We also didn't want to see any more of those older-style cymbals in the shops, so we started a campaign with the dealers in Germany. If they bought two new Meinl cymbals, we'd give them full credit on one old one. We even offered the same deal on other brands! This was a good offer for the dealers, because they were getting rid of their old, unsaleable cymbals at 100% full credit. And it was good for us, because only the new Meinl cymbals were in the stores. The dealers sold them and they were happy. Have you ever seen 30,000 cymbals at one time? We don't have that many in this entire building right now. We sent them back.

After the cymbals have passed our inspection, they are sent to our main warehouse, which is the point from which we handle all our shipping, including the distribution of Tama products for Germany.

DQ: I also see wind instruments.

RM: Yes, we produce certain sections of wind instruments—primarily the valve sections—and I'd like to say a word about how this relates to the cymbal operation. We have some people here who are very, very experienced in toolmaking. If we want to make minor changes in the cymbals—say in making the bells—we can do it easily and smoothly by ourselves. We don't have to ask anyone outside who doesn't really understand the problem for help. The tooling process is thus under our control, and that makes this wind instrument division very important to the cymbal factory. Eventually we'll be marketing our own line of wind instruments in Germany, mainly because we have a fascination with making products, as well as distributing those made by others.

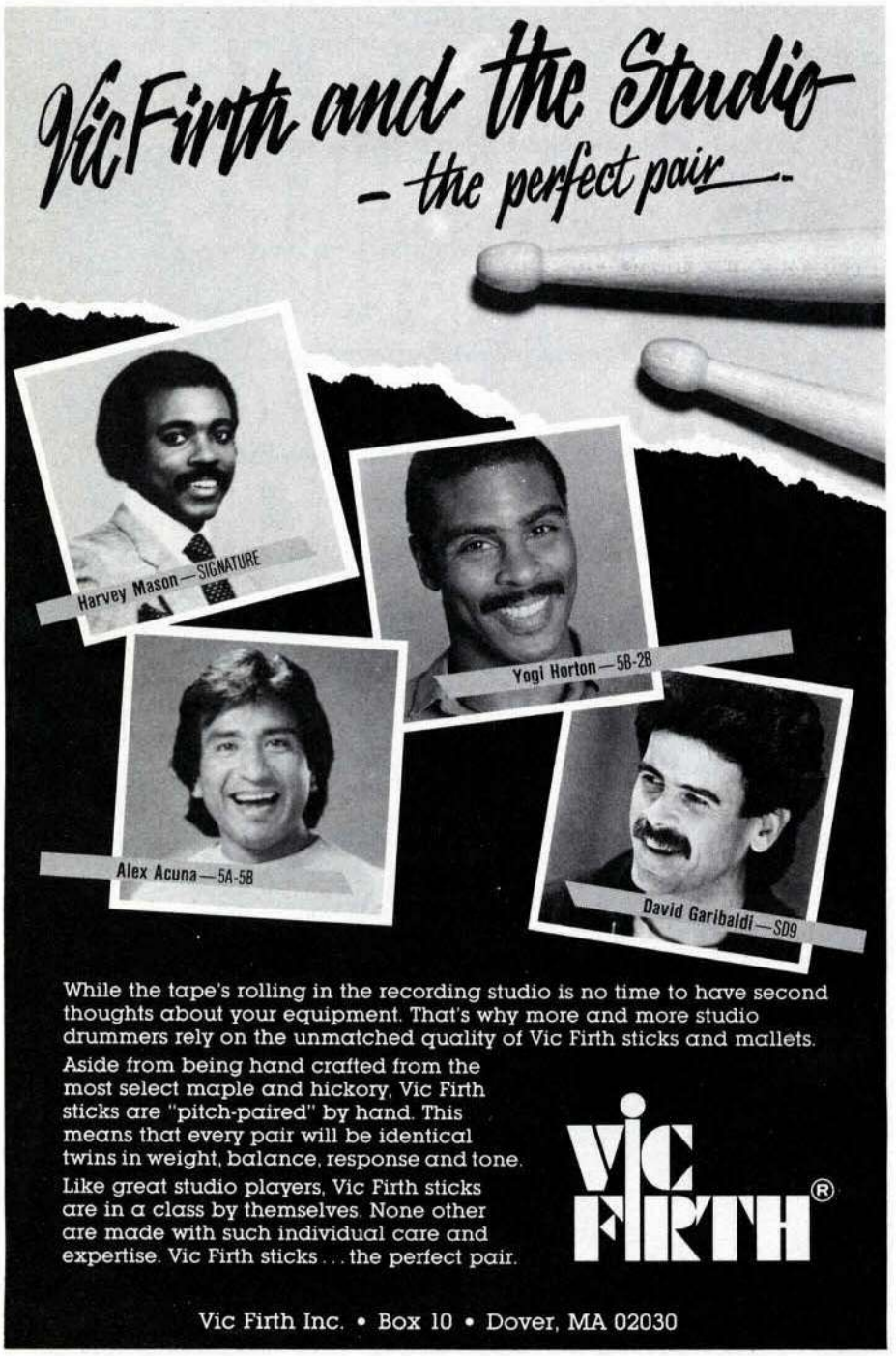
Speaking of distribution, it's very important for us to have the distribution side of our business, because it gives us constant, direct contact with over 800 dealers in Germany, and every day each of those dealers has contact with dozens of musicians. We find out many new things "from the field" through this direct contact with so many dealers—not to mention the many foreign companies whose products we distribute. We think that, in this way, we're less isolated than other cymbal manufacturers. Because of our distribution business, we have a contact with new product developments which is not so easy for the others, because although they can "check it out," they aren't involved with *selling* those products.

DQ: Do you intend to concentrate on America as a sales market?

RM: Well, I think it's *50%* of the world market. But we view any market on its own merits. If we get a very big order from the U.S. and a small order from Denmark, as long as they are both reasonable for their respective markets, we are happy. We want to do a good job in *all* of the markets.

DQ: I notice that you have a fully international operation, and a large amount of space devoted to it, yet you don't really employ a lot of people.

RM: Yes, that's true. But those people keep *very* busy. Some people from the big cities are laughing about us because we are located in the Bavarian countryside, but we find good people who work hard. I think you expected a larger and more complicated operation, but we try to keep our overhead down. For example, in the future, instead of hiring more people, we will hire more machines. As we develop, we're going to remodel the entire production line. What has been happening up until now is that, because of limited space, we haven't achieved the perfect setup. Next year, we're going to set up everything in a better line and make the whole factory a cleaner operation. Everything will be looking very much better the next time you're here.



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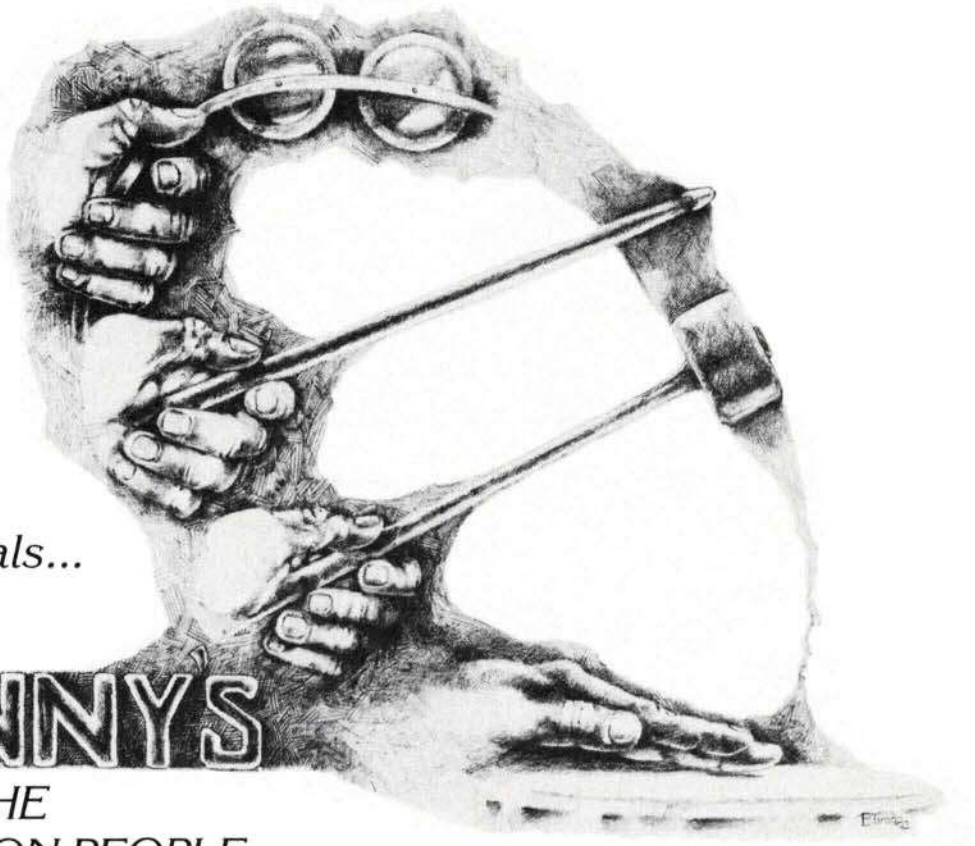

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by Simon Goodwin

The Show Must Go On

Twelve years ago I was playing on the Isle of Man at the time of the Summerland disaster: this large leisure complex went up in flames at about 8 o'clock in the evening when it was full of people. The club where I was playing was less than a mile away, and as clouds of thick black smoke drifted across the bay, the news traveled that Summerland was burning and they hadn't managed to fully evacuate it in time. The keyboard player, bass player and myself decided that we shouldn't play the second set. We didn't think it was right to continue while people were dying under tragic circumstances just a short distance away. The singer, who had employed us, took a different view. He felt that entertainers should take people's minds *off* disasters, and that it wasn't up to us to make a decision of this sort. Hard words were said, a good working relationship was soured, but we stood our ground. The singer went on and played the set on his own, accompanying himself on guitar. The following day we discovered that all the other clubs on the island had ceased their entertainment, which seemed to justify our action. But there was still an uneasy feeling that we had gone against the code. We had broken the golden rule, for everybody involved in the performing arts, that *the show must go on.*

There can be no denying that it's a good rule. You should never need an *excuse* not to play. The situation just shouldn't arise. However, there are occasions when fate puts obstacles in your path which make it difficult for you to play. Let's look at the various forms these obstacles take, and consider how they can be overcome.

Personal Problems

We all know what is meant by this, but how debilitating they can be is a very subjective thing. There are psychological difficulties which we all have to contend with from time to time. You can't imagine many people dropping out of gigs just because they feel a bit down. Playing in a depressed state of mind can have an adverse effect on your performance, but it should never be allowed to reach the stage where it makes you quit. In fact, playing *can* be excellent therapy.

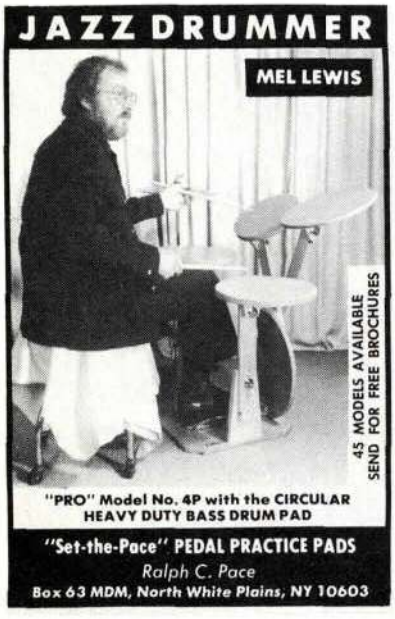
There are occasions when something tragic has occurred in your life, when people would *not* expect you to play. This can be a problem when you just want to do something normal to take your mind off your grief, but everybody is telling you to take time off and sit at home. Sometimes you can't win.

There does come a point when family takes priority over everything else. It might be that, during some sort of domestic crisis, you can't leave the other members of your family to cope by themselves. You will find that people are sympathetic to these problems, and will cover for you if they can.

Health

We've all played, at one time or another, when we weren't feeling up to it. It's a general rule that if you are *capable* of playing, you should do so. If you are feeling ill, there is usually an inner force driving you on to play, which means that sometimes it's necessary to pause and consider the wisdom of playing rather than not playing. It's a matter of weighing the pros and cons. If you play, the band will be getting their regular drummer, not a sub; however, will your performance be so bad that they would be better off *with* a sub? Is there a danger of actually collapsing during the performance? What about the chances of making yourself worse by playing? Better to miss the gig tonight than to miss every one for the next two months. If you have to drive yourself to the gig, you must consider whether you are fit to do so. Are you full of drugs which are making you sleepy? This isn't usually enough to make you miss the gig since you can usually get someone to drive you, unless long distances are involved. What I'm saying is that it's not always a good idea to take the attitude that you are going to make the gig if it kills you because it might do just that!

If you are suffering from an injury, you need to assess the possibility of being able to continue playing until you have recovered. It's possible that your playing could be simplified while remaining sufficiently functional for the job. It's only fair that you consult the other band members; they may not be prepared to put up with a one-handed drummer for a month. If an injury prevents you from playing, you might find that you can be helpful by going to the gig anyway and giving directions to the sub. This isn't as strange as it might sound. You can stand nearby perhaps with a tambourine to help give a percussive lead, and prompt the sub when necessary. If your band doesn't use written arrangements, your presence could make all the difference to the performance.



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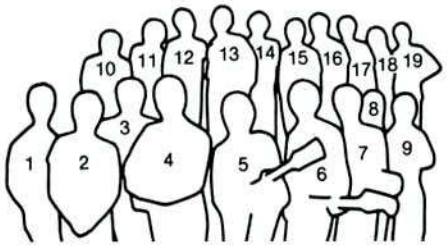

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Transport Failure

There is always the worry that some sort of transport failure will prevent us from getting to the job. The way to combat this is to do everything you can to ensure that your car is in good working order, give yourself ample time, and make sure that you have money and phone numbers to use in emergencies. If you are stuck by the roadside, it's important to phone and let them know you'll be late. If possible, give them an estimated time of arrival so they can plan accordingly. You might find that someone can come and get you. The important thing is not to give up, and not leave the band in the dark as to your whereabouts.

Equipment Failure

True story: A drummer in a famous Dixieland band broke his bass drum pedal early in the concert. Not having a spare, he just carried on without one. At the end of the evening, the leader turned to the bass player and said, "What have you been doing tonight? You're fired!"

There are two morals to be drawn from this story. First, if something of yours breaks during a gig, someone else *might* be blamed, though this is rather unlikely so don't count on it. Secondly, when something goes wrong with your equipment, you need to be prepared to continue and make the best of it. I've seen Buddy Rich stop a show because his bass drum pedalhad broken. But Mr. Rich can say a few words about the manufacturer, crack a few jokes and say goodnight. For most of us, this option just isn't open.

The answer is spares. You know what the vulnerable items in your set are, and you know which items are most essential. For instance, you could probably continue playing with one less cymbal or one less tom-tom, but bass, snare and hi-hat are pretty basic requirements. The problem with carrying a lot of spares is weight, space, and expense. A spare set of batter heads is something that no sensible drummer should travel without. You might not be able to afford a spare bass pedal and hi-hat stand, but a spare spring for each item would be cheap to buy and light to carry around.

Having suitable spares with you, and having time to fit them, doesn't always follow. If you are playing for dancing, or a concert, you can usually ask for a pause to change something over. In these situations, time is of the essence, and those who can afford to have a complete hi-hat stand or snare drum in reserve have an advantage over those who need time to change a spring or a head. You might find that you are involved in something like backing a show, where the proceedings cannot be held up for your benefit. If you suffer a breakage, you must get around the problem as best you can. The only insurance you can take out against this happening is to make sure your equipment is reliable *before* you start playing. If something looks questionable, don't say, "I'll change it when it breaks," because when it breaks, you might not *be able* to change it.

Beyond Your Control

I once arrived at a gig to find that I was the only musician there. I would have thought the whole thing was a mistake if the organizer hadn't been expecting the band who had booked me. The time we were to start playing came and they hadn't arrived. They couldn't be contacted on the phone, and they hadn't contacted the club. The organizer was getting quite worked up, and I was getting the brunt of it. Eventually I said, "If you'll guarantee payment, whether the others turn up or not, I'll get a couple of musicians to play tonight," which is exactly what happened. I'm not saying what I did was particularly clever, but the point is, the organizer didn't know what to do. He wasn't a musician; he was an accountant running his company's annual dinner dance. I had the contacts and knew who to call. Things can go wrong which are obviously not your fault, but don't automatically assume that they are beyond your control. If you are able to help out when things seem to be getting out of control, so much the better. If you can ensure that the show does *go on,* you're at least making sure that you get paid as you were expecting, to say nothing of adding to the size of your own little halo.

Must The Show Go On?

The answer to this question is, one way or another, *yes.* Musicians who are not in their chairs at the right time will be missed far more than bank clerks or insurance salespeople. If, for any reason, you are unable to make the gig, you must give as much notice as possible so that alternate arrangements can be made.

After the basic requirements of food, shelter and warmth have been achieved, a desire for entertainment is surprisingly high on the list of human priorities. People will always want to be entertained, but things are changing. At the same time as the video and computer revolution is increasing the scope that people have for home entertainment, the cost of actually going to a concert, a club, or a restaurant is increasing. As a matter of survival, it's necessary for everybody who is involved in live entertainment to make sure that customers get their money's worth. If they go to a show only to find it canceled, or if they go to a club and come away saying, "We couldn't dance to the band because the drummer didn't show up," they probably won't bother to go out again for some time. And they won't be the *only* losers.

LEARNING TO PLAY THE DRUM SET DOES NOT TAKE TIME

I have announced that I can teach a qualified drummer to play better in six weeks. I have stated both in print and at interviews in my New York studio that when a drummer plays in public with a group, or at home with his stereo, he will feel this improvement in five ways: (1) he will experience a generalized relaxation; (2) his sense of time and feeling for rhythm will improve; (3) he will be able to pay attention with less effort; (4) he will find it easier to remember arrangements; (5) his ears will start to open up in unexpected ways.

If you read such an assertion in print you may feel some scepticism. The reason for that has nothing to do with my assertion, but rather it has to do with your belief that your drumming is just fine. Yes, a few things have to be polished here and adjusted there, but you know, (or do you believe) that you will be getting better. You know what you have to accomplish for the improvement, and that you will take or are now involved in an approach that will lead you to your goal. But of one thing you are certain: to get to that goal is going to take TIME. And now a strange drum teacher is telling you that it does not take time. One of us has to be off-the-wall and it certainly cannot be you.

I think the first thing we must discuss is what do we mean by time? The problem is that there are three different kinds of time and I'm operating in one kind of time and you are operating in, of course, correct time. Let's look into it.

The first kind of time is mechanical time. That is measured by the clock. The day is divided into twenty-four parts called hours and each hour is divided into sixty parts called minutes. You look at the clock and in all seriousness call it real time. I look at it and call it mechanical time.

The second kind of time is psychological time. Psychological time is when you and I think about what we should have done yesterday and what we're going to do tomorrow. Today we do nothing because all we are interested in doing is sitting around and thinking of the past and the future. When we sit around and think about what we should have done and what we are going to do we believe and identify with these thoughts as if we were actually living them now. We call that kind of imagining real life. When I get involved in this kind of psychological "living" I catch on faster than most that I am involved in it and I know what to do to stop the nonsense.

The third kind of time is real or actual time. When we watch the sun set, when we play games, when we play our music or listen to music, when we are in a relationship with a friend, we are in real time. In real time, clock or mechanical time and psychological time immediately and completely come to a stop. In real time there is no awareness of time. This is not profound philosophy. All I'm describing is what we all have experienced.

You are sceptical about what I say in respect to obtaining results in six weeks because you absolutely believe that it is necessary to first go through mechanical time and psychological time in order to get to real time. I say that I have the educational trip to get you into real time immediately. Now, if you say that mechanical time and psychological time are absolutely necessary in learning music and life, and wish to pursue that, I will not stop or try to influence you. After all, it's your life and not mine.

A drum authority was asked how long it takes to become a really good drummer. His answer: "This is an easy one. All your life." His problem is that he views drumming as a skill based upon knowledge and experience. I see drumming as a state of being based upon talent and the capacity of the individual to stay with that talent. The drum authority expects that, with skill, knowledge, and experience developed in the present, one may expect to unexpectedly bump into this state of being in the future without looking. "Look Ma, I'm playing the drums with no hands." My position is that if you approach drumming as skill, knowledge, and experience, it is something you will not learn in this life time and you will not learn it in ten life times or 1,000 reincarnations. Please take note that the drum authority has no difficulty himself in taking a shortcut through time to tell you it is really all about a longcut—namely, all your life.

The drum authority is actually stuck in mechanical time (in more ways than one) when he tells you it takes all your life. It is the evidence that one can never get to real time if you begin with the belief that it is necessary to first pass through mechanical time and psychological time. When he tells you that it takes a life time he feels that he is expressing modesty and humility. When I hear what he is saying, I can only tell him he is confused, frustrated and bored.

The drum authority has not presented any evidence to a grand jury that a crime has been committed, nor has anyone been asked to stand trial before a judge and jury of one's peers. But our splendid drum authority has given you and me a life sentence of hard labor getting our rocks off in mechanical and psychological time. The

actual crime, of course, is when an individual is born with talent. Talent is the capacity to play the drums right from the beginning without instruction or time, and to attract the attention of one's peers and be invited to play with them.

The assertion that drumming takes one's entire life to learn is also illogical. How can a drum authority know it takes his entire life when he is only a man in his late forties. He has yet to live his life. But yet he informs us that he "knows" it is going to take you all your life to learn. All he is telling us is the way he feels about himself. He has elected to believe that he must move through mechanical and psychological time as a ritual of passage to get to what he hopes will be real time. But is he not in the position of the bicyclist on the stationary bike in the gym? He is so convinced daily practice and effort on it will help him win the race, he brings the stationary bike to the contest on the day of the race. His cardiovascular system will certainly be in a race for better health. Can it be that the drummers of the world are at the start of the race on the stationary bike? Then a weird drum teacher comes along and points out to the fraternity that they are indeed firmly seated on the stationary bike of mechanical and psychological time. Moreover, when you enter real time there is no race.

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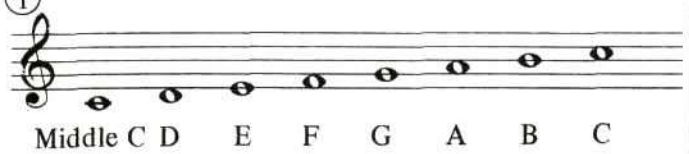
by Bill Molenhof

The Scale-Part 2

In our first article, we discussed how a major scale was constructed from any pitch. Do you remember how? You can construct a major scale from any note by following this pattern: two whole steps, one half step, three whole and one half. To make it even easier, just remember to place half steps between pitches three and four, and seven and eight. In this sequence, we will look at how scales or pitch sequences can be manipulated into musical phrases.

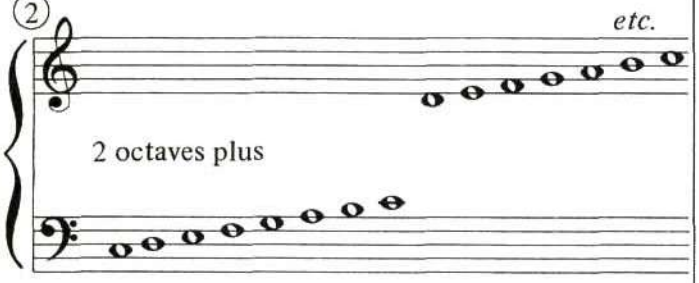
There are several stages to increasing your understanding of scale vocabulary and usage. Initially, one learns the sequence from root to root (C to C, one octave as in example 1) and sees the shape of the scale—all white notes or lower-manual natural notes.

1

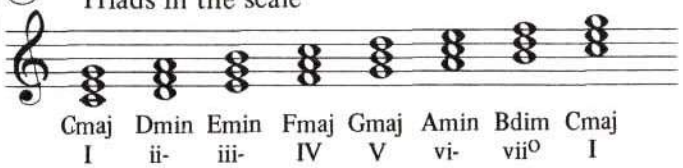


The next step (example 2) is to continue the sequence from the lowest C on your instrument to the highest. Playing through several octaves repeats the shape or the visual configuration of all the white notes, which will strengthen your perception of the sound and picture of the C major scale.

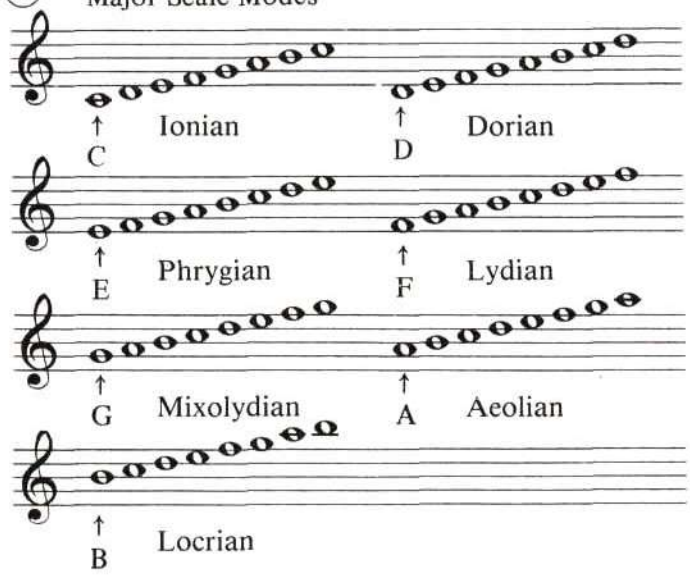
2



The next stage (example 3) is to be able to play the harmonic triads within the scale by combining alternating pitches. In the key of C major, this triad combination is CEG, DFA, EGB, FAC, etc. These triads are the basis of our harmonic system, which is primarily built on thirds or tertiary intervals.

3 Triads in the scale

The next step (example 4) is to realize that a new scale can be built by using the same pitch sequence or shape of the C major scale, but beginning on each member of the pitch sequence. By this, I mean playing the notes in a C major scale, but starting the scale on a note other than C. This is how the modes are derived. For example, the C major scale starting on C would be the Ionian mode, starting on D it would be the Dorian mode, on E it would be the Phrygian mode, etc.

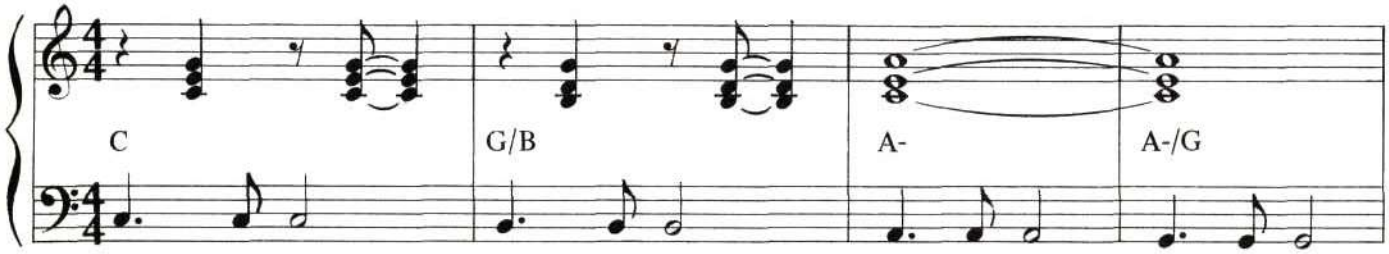
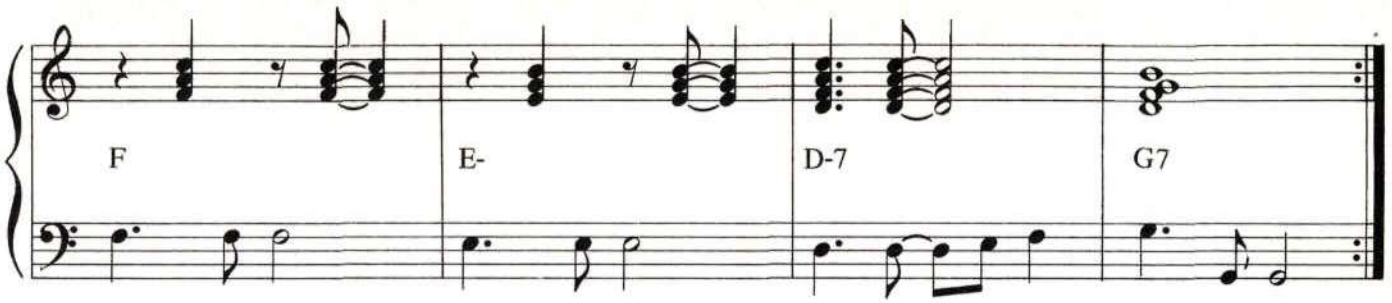
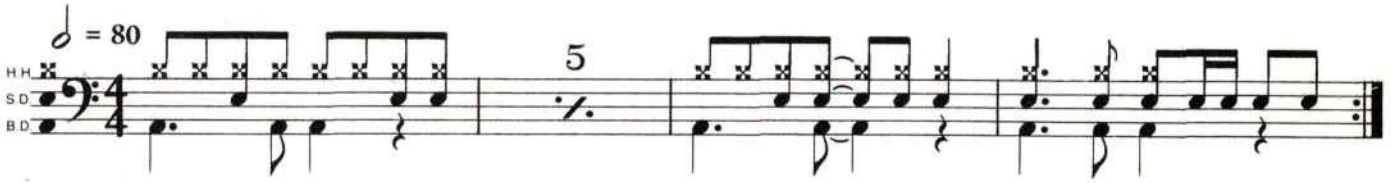
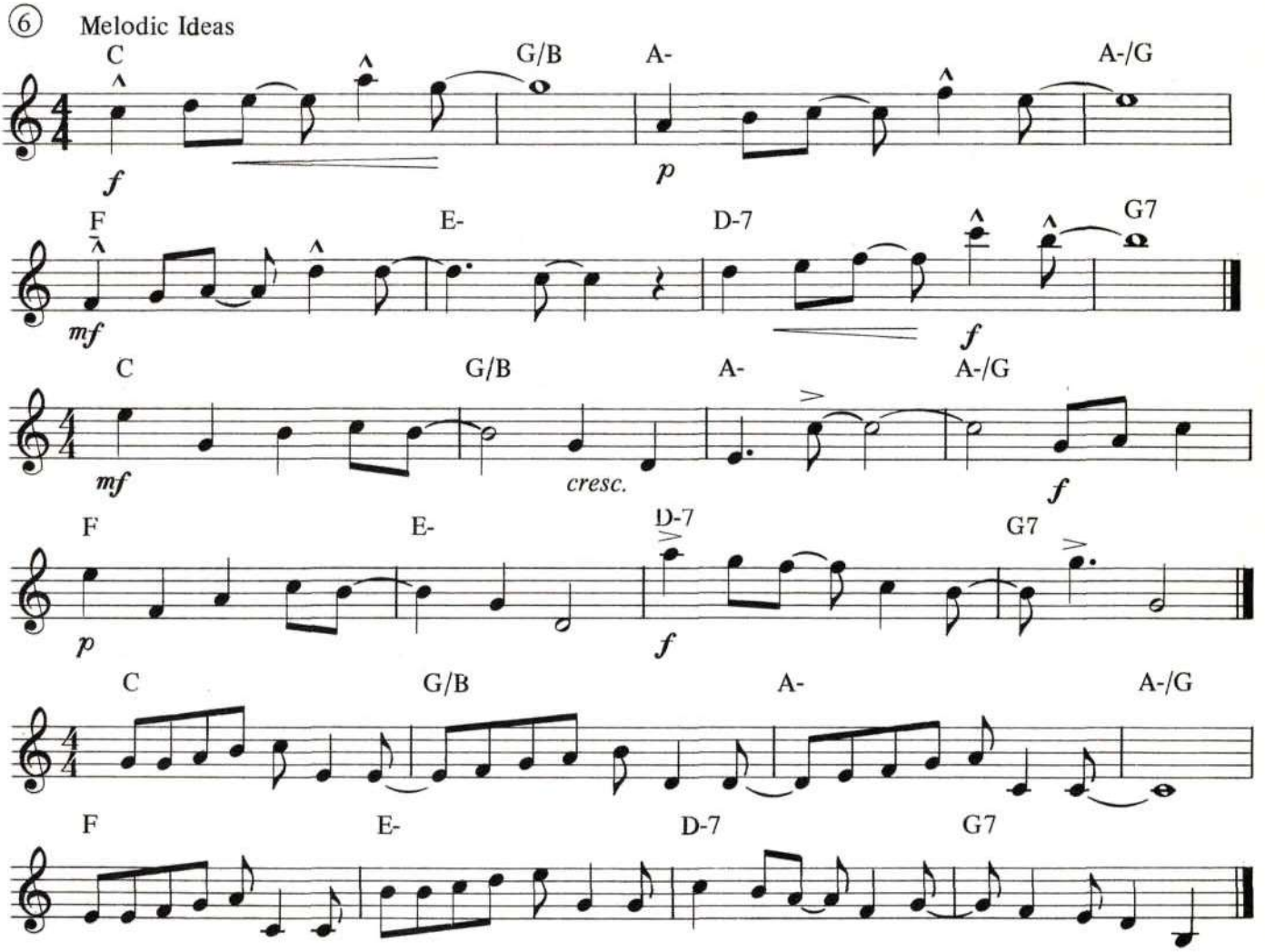
4 Major Scale Modes



It is very important that you learn the 12 major key scales/shapes. Be sure to apply these examples in all keys.

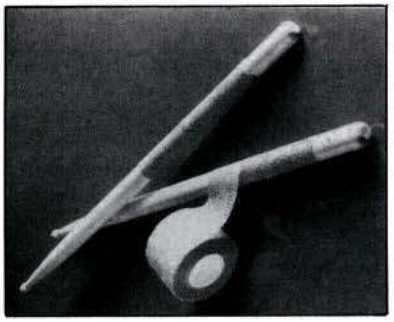
After you have gained some control of examples 1 through 4, try the following exercises I have written (example 5). The point is to understand the concept of the scale and use that concept in music, not just in practicing scales. You will have a lot more fun and enjoyment playing and practicing if you can learn a working vocabulary of the musical language, and can freely call upon this language to express your ideas.

First, work on the keyboard part to example 5. The left hand is simply a descending C major scale with a very typical bass/bass drum rhythm. The right hand is playing triads from the scale in the rhythm of the background figure. Notice how the voicing moves while holding the common tone whenever possible (the right hand, note G in measures 1 and 2, and notes D and F in measures 7 and 8).

5 Country-Rock Feel (♩ = 80)

Next, learn the drum part. Work for a perfect groove with the metronome, improvising your own fill at the turnaround (measures 7 and 8) after you know the complete phrase.

Finally, have your friends or band members play these parts while you improvise a melody over this phrase. All of the material is derived from the C major scale (the white notes only), so all you need to do is stick to the naturals, listen and have fun. If you are by yourself, try tape recording the background parts and then play it back while soloing on top. See the melodic ideas in example 6.

When playing the melodic ideas in example 6, be sure to pay close attention to the following: the similarity and repetition of rhythms; the melodic shape and contour of the phrases; the pitch-sequence relationships to harmony; the idea of reworking through an eight-bar progression with one central theme; the use of the space in the line so that the listener can absorb the notes you do play; and the use of phrasing, dynamics, and attacking the notes.

At every practice session, learn to hear and play scales and chords, and be sure to integrate your drumming into musical settings. That is where the action is.

IT'S ALL WRAPPED UP.



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Olsson continued from page 29

tra, but I like it.

RF: You also play piano.

NO: [laughs] Only the black notes. Just a little bit. If I'm writing a song, I start off on the piano just to get inspired, but I can't play it to any extent.

RF: What did your solo project fulfill that Elton could not?

NO: It's great to be able to go in and create something for myself with my name on the front. It's a bit egotistical, I guess, but it was a challenge. I enjoyed doing it and working with different people of my choice. And Elton is always there to help me out if I need him to come in and do anything. I'm looking forward to the next one.

RF: Are there plans for a next one?

NO: When the tour is over, I'm going to meet with James Stroud in Nashville. Apparently, he has another 400 tapes in his office that I have to hear. Also, I'm starting to write again. I don't know when I'm going to record the album, but I'm getting inspired to do one again.

RF: What inspires you to write?

NO: I write better if I'm in love or just over a relationship, but now it's being on the road and missing people.

RF: How did the group come back together?

NO: Elton just called me and said, "I want to put the band back together. I've talked to Dee and Davey, and we'll bring another keyboard player in to play the electronic stuff. What do you think?" And I said, "Give me a couple of minutes and I'll be over." That's basically how everything comes together in this organization—just a phone call. We recently came off a tour where we started in Australia and played all around Europe, through the Eastern block countries, which was just great. We had six weeks off and then I got a call from our tour manager saying, "Your flight leaves ..." It wasn't a case of "Do you want to do another tour?" I've never even signed a contract. It's all done out of trust, which is great. It's great being with your friends together as a family.

RF: Where do you live?

NO: In Raleigh, North Carolina. My wife is from there, but I've always liked the South. I lived in L.A. for five years and it just got to me with the business, backstabbing, and plastic people. Then I moved down to the Marina, which was even more intense. So I moved down there, and it's great because I have a built-in large family.

RF: You keep mentioning the family feeling of the band, and I wonder if you could ever find yourself being a session player?

NO: I was in the L.A. session circuit when the band split up way back, which I enjoyed and made a lot of money doing. I was pleased with what I did.

RF: What were some of the projects you did?

NO: Rod Stewart, Linda Ronstadt, I did a couple of things for Leo Sayer, and Rick Springfield. Dee and I did an album with

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Rick when he first came out here, called *Wait For Night,* which is a fantastic album. I'm so, so happy for Rick because he's a wonderful guy. It took him a lot of years to make it, but he finally did. He's a great bloke. I'm proud to have been involved with that. I played with Neil Sedaka on his comeback, so being part of history is a great feeling.

RF: Do you recall any non-Elton records that were particularly challenging or fun to do?

NO: The Rick Springfield album. We recorded the drums by miking them straight into the tape machine, not through the board, which was the strangest way I've ever recorded. It took a long time to tune them right, because there wasn't the EQ on the board. It had to be more intricately tuned. The sound was amazing, though, and with the echo, it was humongous. That was one of the weirdest, but more interesting ways, I've recorded and it turned out great.

I've really enjoyed doing other projects though, because they gave me a chance to work with other musicians and different styles of playing. I enjoyed the Rod Stewart thing and Linda Ronstadt was great.

RF: When you did sessions, didn't you have to read?

NO: No. I told them up front I couldn't read, so I just played it the way I felt it.

RF: Is there anything that you haven't done that you would like to do?

NO: I think I would like to produce a record or do a movie score. I'd love to do a movie score. I have lots of ideas on tape just from playing around on the piano. And I'd love to be in a film. I'd just like to see what it's like and to be behind the camera as well. But there aren't any movies in the works, [laughs] No scoop.

RF: How long is this tour?

NO: This tour is kind of a long one. The roughest part of the tour is doing six in a row. Last night, I found that it was beginning to tell on me.

RF: How do you keep your stamina up on a tour like that?

NO: I can't say that I sleep well and eat well, because I don't. I find myself going to bed at maybe 2:00 in the morning, but not getting to sleep until maybe 5:00 or 6:00. I clock watch after that. I wake up, look at the clock, and think, "Okay, I have six more hours to sleep—great. I've got four more hours to sleep ..." Finally, I fall into a good sleep, the phone rings and it's baggage call. I like to eat good, healthy stuff, but it usually ends up that I eat in the dressing room—cold cuts, burgers, fries and all that. In some of the places in Europe, the food was so dreadful that Davey, Dee and I would sit down to a plate of french fries and catsup. But we had fun and got through it. We don't take ultra-good care of ourselves on the road. It's hard to do because we like to party. But after the sixth day, we need a day off. Most of my days off are spent sleeping and

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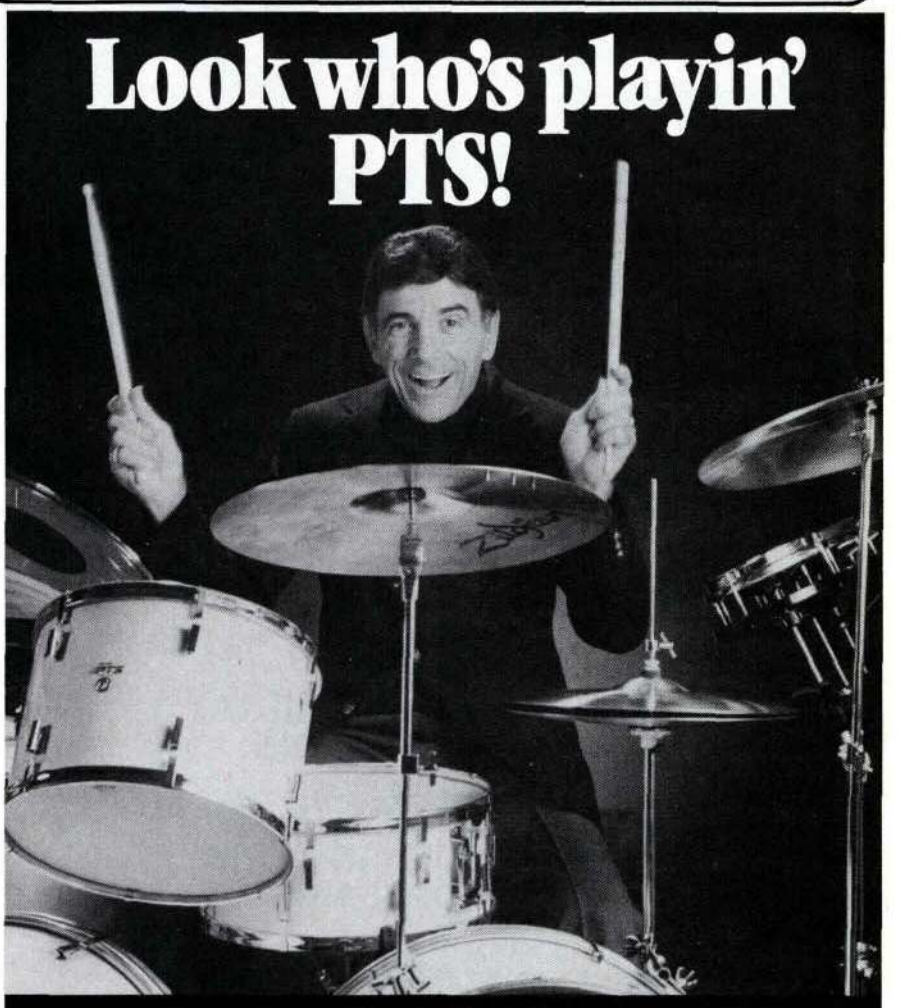

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watching *Bewitched,* which is my favorite TV show. It always has been.

RF: That must say something about you.

NO: I live in a fairy land. [laughs]

RF: You like magic.

NO: Yes, I do. I love all that stuff.

RF: You've been with Elton for a lot of years. When you play "Your Song" for the four thousandth time, how can you not be sick of it?

NO: Because of what you just said—the magic is the integral part of this whole family. I'm sick of "Crocodile Rock," but as soon as we start playing it, the crowd goes mad. I hate that song, but it's all the interaction. They're loving it, so I have to give them everything because they're the reason I'm doing what I'm doing. I like to give back. It's great to see people smiling. The Eastern Block taught me a lot about life. We can go over there, make people smile and have a good time, and be in a crowded auditorium with thousands of people who aren't fighting each other. We went to Auschwitz and saw what happened there. It changed my life. The last tour changed my thinking. If I, myself, can make one person happy in that audience, then that's the whole thing for me. And I mean that from the heart.

RF: What have been some of the career highlights?

NO: Central Park was a highlight and seeing that many people in the daylight. We could really see, but there were so many

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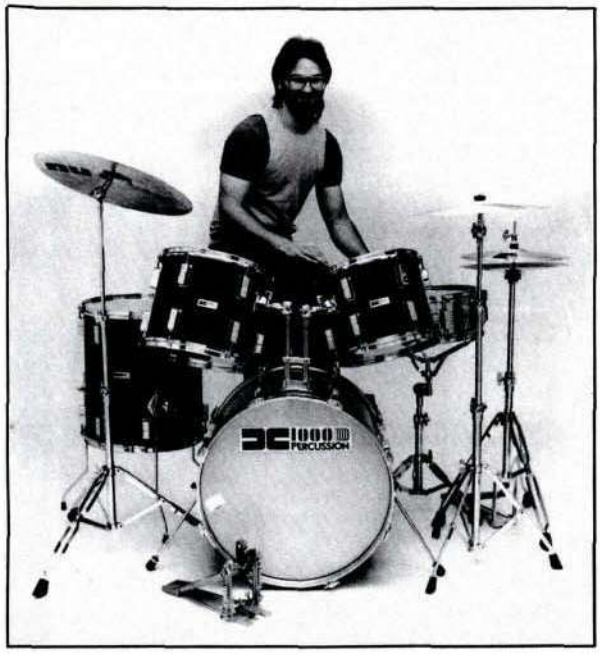

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people it was just a sea of people. Playing for the Queen Mother at the Royal Command Performance was fun. Everything is a highlight really, being with this organization. I'm looking forward to playing the Garden tomorrow, although I'm getting a bit nervous.

RF: Nervous?

NO: I get frightened to death every time I go out. You can't talk to me before a concert. An hour before I go on, I'm shaking and just pacing the floor. I really don't know why. It's always been the same. It's not that I'm worried that I'll drop a drumstick or play the wrong fill. It's just all those people out there. It's very weird, but I get it every single time we play.

RF: Talking about your playing Madison Square Garden, when you were scuffling in Sunderland and you saw the Beatles start up, did you ever think, in your wildest dreams, that you'd be doing that?

NO: I always wanted to, even as a little lad at boarding school. I used to go to boarding school in Wales, which I hated every second of. I was there from when I was five until I was 13. I hated math and I couldn't understand why anyone would want to take Latin unless it was to become a doctor. All I wanted to do was use the school record player and play Lonnie Donnegan or Cliff Richard records. I used to mime to records with a frying pan, pretending it was a guitar. All I wanted to do was be on stage as a performer. I remember the headmaster taking me into his study one time and saying, "Olsson, you're bone idle and you'll never go anywhere." A few years later, I went back to the school and the headmaster said, "Olsson, you're the only boy I was ever wrong about. We saw you play for the Queen the other week on television and the school is very proud of you." That was great. I could see that it was killing him to say it, but I taught him.

I remember seeing the Beatles at a dance hall in Sunderland on their first tour when "Love Me Do" first came out. I remember that Paul McCartney threw this guy off stage who was the best fighter in Sunderland. They were screaming so loud that the Beatles stopped playing and John said, "If you don't shut up, we're going home." That was the inspiration. And then to be able to meet the Beatles and be their friend—I'm good friends with Ringo and I was good friends with John. There was one time in New York just before we did the Garden when John came on stage. I was up in John's apartment and he said, "You know, the song you should do is 'When A Man Loves A Woman,' because you have that high voice." So I said, "Why don't you write me a song?" He asked what kind of song I would like him to write for me. I said, "Something like 'Imagine.' " And he said, "If I wrote another 'Imagine,' I'd do it my bloody self." To know those people is so great. What a life! I'm so glad to be blessed with all this.

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As the title indicates, this book deals with quintuplet exercises and fills. A quintuplet is a group of five notes to be played in the space of one beat. Joel Rothman has written quintuplet fills around the drumset. The first few pages deal with one- and two-beat breaks. Inserted within these pages are some nice quintuplet sticking patterns. Rothman has also written rock breaks doubling the quintuplets over one and two beats. It should be explained at this point that a quintuplet may be played in the space of one, two, or three beats, but in this book, it is played only in one or two beats. The book also explores five-stroke rolls on quintuplets and then puts them into rock breaks.

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New York, NY 10025
Price: $50.00

This book has been around awhile, but it's been in and out of print a couple of times. So we thought that, since we had never reviewed it, we'd take this opportunity to look at it, as it is now back in print.

First, a little history might be appropriate. Chapin put out his first book in 1948, and after drummers got over their initial skepticism—a lot of people thought that the book was unplayable—the Chapin book became *the* book to master. One thing that intrigued everyone was that, from the very beginning, the book was identified as "Vol. I." What new challenges would Vol. II provide? It took 20 years to find out the answer.

Vol. II (subtitled *The Open End)* finally appeared in the early '70s, and even a cursory glance revealed that this wasn't your everyday drum book. It came in a binder and featured removable pages which could be superimposed over each other (both backwards and upside down) creating almost endless possibilities for creating coordination patterns—from very simple to very complex.

This is not a book of grooves, as such, but interesting patterns do turn up here and there. Basically, this book will help your coordination and reading. It can also help you to get more involved in your own development, because although Chapin gives numerous suggestions and examples of how to use the book, it is ultimately up to the individual to put together the combinations and work out the different possibilities. You cannot simply open the book to page one, and mechanically play through to the end. In a sense, the book will grow with you. The more thought you put into this book, the more it will help you.

The price tag is hefty, but if you would prefer to buy one book and use it for years, as opposed to buying several books which only hold you for a few weeks each, then, in the long run, this book might be quite a bargain.

Richard Egart

MODERN PHRASING IN 4/4
A Guide to Contemporary Drumming
by Robert Jackson
Publ: Robert Jackson
99 Blueberry Hill
Sudbury, MA 01776
Price: $12.00

Mr. Jackson divides his 133-page book into three "basic styles of 4/4 music: rock, funk and jazz." The author describes his book as "not an overly technical book, but a musical ideabook." The rock section contains snare drum/bass drum combinations. The player is asked to play the rhythm as written, and then add the cymbal in 8th notes, repeating each rhythm at least four times before going on. The notation in the rock section is basic, using quarter notes and rests, and 8th notes and rests.

The funk section presents 16th notes. There is a reference page, which illustrates the proper placement of 8th-note/16th-note rhythms, as well as dotted 8th-note/16th-note rhythms. This reference page is of considerable help when dealing with a student who does not read music well. The funk section is set up the same as the rock section. It progresses in the degree of difficulty, culminating with "some very challenging patterns." At this point in the text, the author presents "a list of other available cymbal and closed hi-hat patterns that can be used in place of 8th notes." The student is then told to return to the front of the book and apply all the cymbal patterns. The last 12 pages of the rock section deal with open/closed hi-hat patterns.

The jazz section of the book begins with an explanation of "swing feel." The exercise pages deal with a constant ride cymbal, hi-hat pattern, played against the snare drum and bass drum which are usually associated with bebop drumming. The jazz section becomes particularly interesting with the introduction of exercises in song forms. Mr. Jackson also includes recommended listening for each form study. He has chosen tunes by John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis and Charlie Parker—four musicians who typify the jazz style. The final 35 pages contain exercises for the development of fills and solos. Mr. Jackson has developed his own method of writing these exercises, using numbers to identify the cymbals and drums. At first, this number system is a bit confusing, but should become easier once the pattern is learned.

Modern Phrasing In 4/4 is a solidly written text with an abundance of material. Almost any student should be able to use this book with success. The independence required in the jazz section is not for beginners, but with some effort on the student's part, this section could serve as an introduction to this style of playing.

Glenn Weber

RU-MASTER SERIES, VOL. 1
by "Red" Williams
Publ: Ru-Master Productions
Box 15635
No. Hollywood CA 91615-5635
Price: $13.95 (includes book and tape)

In Volume 1 of the *Ru-Master Series,* "Red" Williams notates the long roll, five-stroke roll, seven-stroke roll, nine-stroke roll, flam, flam accent, flam accent variations, flamacue, jam flamacue ("Red's" own), three-stroke ruff, three-stroke ruff variations, four-stroke ruff, single drag, single drag variations, single paradiddle exercises, double paradiddle exercises, triple paradiddle exercises, single ratamacue, and single ratamacue variations.

This book is eight pages long and is basically a rudiment sheet. 1 feel that the $13.95 price tag is for the very high quality cassette tape. I found the cassette to be one of the better snare drum audios. This tape would be beneficial to a beginning student. "Red" Williams executes the above rudiments very well.

Joe Buerger

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IT'S QUESTIONABLE

Have a problem? A question? Ask MD. Address all questions to: Modern Drummer, c/o It's Questionable, 870 Pompton Ave., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Questions cannot be answered personally.

Q. I have recently stumbled across a set of Hollywood drums, made by the Meazzi company of Milan, Italy. They are unlike any you've ever seen. The four drums, stands and all, and the hi-hat, all attach to a single frame, and the set actually collapses into itself to form a compact "box" for transport. Additionally, the drums come equipped with microphones built into each shell. Mic' cables feed into a junction box, which in turn feeds into a control box that is a combined mixer and effects module, with settings for "snare," "bass" and "toms," to which can be added treble, bass, and "effect."

Can you give me a brief history of these drums, and tell me if they would be of interest to collectors? E.D.
Staten Island, NY

A. Our drum history consultant, Ken Mezines, did some research on this question, and provided this report: The drums are the President Tronicdrum *model, and appeared in the mid- to late '60s. The drums were distributed in the U. S. by the Carl Fisher Musical Instrument Company in New York, and a 1968 catalog (featuring a photo of Max Roach playing a* Tronic *set on the cover), lists the selling price for the set you describe at $1,300.00. Unfortunately, this set is not old enough to be a collector's item, and although it was indeed unique, that uniqueness alone does not make it of interest to collectors. You must view these drums as you would the Edsel, made by Ford. The product didn't sell when it originally came out, and is still not a highly collectible item. Coupled with the fact that parts for this system are virtually impossible to find, we would not put a lot of stock into this set.*

The Meazzi company went on to produce HiPercussion drums, which features an incredibly elaborate hardware system. In this system, all of the drums were mounted on interconnecting pipes attached to a rolling frame at the side of the bass drum. Both the Hollywood and the HiPercussion lines had innovative features that ultimately became popular with other brands. The set you describe combines elements of the May E.A. miking system and current electronic drumsets. The HiPercussion mounting system may be the predecessor of the many new "rack" systems, notably Pearl's and Milestone's. It was a case of a product being ahead of its time, and not catching the imagination of the public, while it certainly caught the attention of industry designers responsible for later products.

Q. A year ago I bought a 6½ x 14 wood Slingerland snare that I dearly love. I took the internal muffler out of the snare, and now use an Evans *Hydraulic* head with a Rogers external muffler slightly torqued down against the head—very slightly! I recently bought a 9" Slingerland snare (with the same wood type and thickness as the 61/2"), hoping to get a lower, deep sound. I use the exact same heads, snares, mufflers, etc., on both drums. But when 1 tune the 9" snare to where it sounds and feels good to me, the pitch and sound are identical to the 6 1/2"! Is a 2 1/2" difference in depth between the two snares really going to sound different? T. J.
San Jose, CA

A. In theory, drums that are identical in all respects other than depth should in fact sound different; the deeper shell should give a deeper tone. But "deeper tone" may or may not mean "lower pitch." The pitch of a drum is decided more by the head (and shell) diameter than by the shell depth. What a deeper shell gives you generally is more body—a fuller, rounder and basically bigger *sound. So it is possible that the two drums would give you the same starting pitch, despite their different shell depths.*

The key here may be your phrase "sounds and feels good to me." If you're used to the sound and feel produced by the 6 1/2" drum you've "dearly loved" for the past year, then you may be unconsciously tuning the new drum to obtain exactly that same sound and feel, even though consciously that is not what you desire. It may be necessary to experiment with head types and tension, in order to get the deeper sound you're looking for. Additionally, by the time you use the modifying characteristics of a Hydraulic *head in conjunction with an external muffler, there's not a lot of resonance and tone left for any shell to work with. Give the new drum a whole new set of variables to work with in achieving the sound you want: heads, tension, muffling, etc., and try to evaluate the sound on its own, rather than in comparison to the other snare.*

Q. I have a drumkit with *CS* Black Dot drumheads, which I've had for a little over a year now. I've noticed a sandy film coating on the dot portion of these heads. Could you please tell me what this substance is, and how to remove it?

M.R.
Queens, NY

A. According to Lloyd McCausland, National Sales and Marketing Manager for Remo, Inc.: "The 'sandy film coating' on the dot portion of the CS *heads is a very thin, 2-mil film coating that is laminated on the top side of the* CS *Black Dot. The construction of the* CS *centerpiece is a lamination consisting of adhesive applied to a truly black film, with another transparent film laminated on the top of the black film, acting as a protector against fatigue and scuff marks. This 2-mil protective covering will eventually wear and fatigue, and could begin to flake and peel. Our tests indicate that players cannot hear an audible difference when this occurs; the protective film is for cosmetic purposes only. The drumhead continues to have lots of life expectancy for applicable use. Should the visible cosmetic change be offensive, the consumer would have to replace the drumhead with a new one, in order to get the new, clean look again."*

Q. How does a drummer get involved in recording themes to TV shows and working on movie soundtracks? Is this another category of studio drumming?

J.V.
Houston, TX

A. TV and film recording is indeed a type of studio drumming, and a very exacting one. In some cases, major studios will have musicians under contract for their recording purposes, but in most cases, a musical director or contractor will be engaged to gather the musicians to record a TV theme or movie soundtrack. Generally, the contractor will try to get the same high-quality players that you see on many top musical albums, since their caliber of musicianship is well known. If you are a drummer who hopes to specialize in doing this kind of recording work, you would need to make yourself and your abilities known to the producers and musical directors in charge of such projects. You could contact a few of the major movie studios, or some of the larger independent production companies, and try to get the names of the people to contact. From there on, it's a matter of getting through to them.

Q. Who was the drummer on *Herb Alpert Presents Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66?* I, and a lot of other young drummers at that time, learned bossa nova from him.

R.S.
Norfolk, VA

A. We forwarded your question to Hal Blaine, who, in turn, contacted Bob Garcia in the A&M Records research department. The drummer on the album you mentioned was Joao Palma.

Correction: In the December '84 *It's Questionable* we stated that the Zalmer *Twin* pedal could be ordered directly from Universal Percussion. Universal Percussion is the wholesale distributor for the Zalmer *Twin,* and does not sell directly to the public. However, you may contact them at 427 Fifth St., Struthers, OH 44471, or call (216) 755-6423 to obtain the name and address of the Zalmer dealer nearest you.

Q. I've been looking for a pre-CBS set of Rogers drums (circa 1966). While it would be self-evident to me whether a set was made before or after the takeover (by weight, sound, and so on) if I could see the drums myself, it's often hard for me to help a seller ascertain this by mail or phone. There are certain clues, like bass drum tuning rods, interior shell paint, logos, etc., but in a long-distance search these are hard to communicate. I'm wondering if serial numbers can be used as a guide (and if so, at what number *Holiday* bass drums and toms and *Dyna-Sonic* snare drums changed over), or if there is some other simple, objective way to tell the difference.

A.K.
Fairfax, VA

A. According to drum historian Ken Mezines, "Unfortunately, Rogers kept no records of the serial numbers on their Dyna-Sonic *snares, so the only way to tell the age is by the snare gate on the lower rim. If the rim is bolted on, it is a 1960s to 1975 snare drum, which goes through the CBS period. If the gate is welded on, it was made after 1975. There were no serial numbers on Rogers drums, so getting an exact date on a set is almost impossible. Rogers did make a variety of colors, which will help you to pinpoint dates or at least periods in time. The* Holiday *model Rogers drums stopped sometime in the mid '60s, and no serial numbers were issued on those drums. For those who are interested in Rogers drums, please write or call my shop for a more comprehensive history, which we have in our files. Also, anyone who owns Rogers drums should have a copy of Louie* Bellson Big Band Drumming. *There are some wonderful pictures of CBS Rogers drums with Louis—a great addition to anyone's collection. The photos go into great detail on many of the drums, and provide a wealth of visual information about the Rogers drums of that period." Ken may be contacted at 11207 Olive Street, Creve Coeur, MO 63141, or call (314) 432-4945.*

Q. I would like to know where I could purchase Carmine Appice's books *Realistic Rock* and *Rudiments To Rock.* I checked in local bookstores and music shops, and could not find them anywhere.

C.G.
Mansfield, PA

A. According to Carmine, if you cannot find the books locally, you can order them directly from Carmine Appice Enterprises Inc., P.O. Box 69780(Wl), Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Q. I do some studio work and have always used a six-piece Slingerland set with no bottom heads, because the drums were so easy to make sound good in the studio. But I just ordered a five-piece Slingerland set with double-headed power toms. How would I deaden the sound on these drums without always changing the tuning?

M.S.
Branford, CT

A. There are any number of methods used to deaden double-headed drums for studio purposes, including products like Deadringers *or Remo* Muffls, *the use of moleskin, felt, or tissue taped to the heads, etc. These have been described often by artists interviewed in* MD *and in various features* MD *has presented on the subject of drum tuning. But your question raises another: If you're happy with the sound you get with single-headed drums, why switch to double-headed ones? Even if the new set you've ordered comes with bottom heads, there's no reason, other than personal preference, to leave those bottom heads on the drums.*

On the other hand, why not be open to the possibility of a new *sound that might be different from, but equally as good as, what you've been used to up until now? The use of more open, resonant drums has come into more and more favor in the last few years, even in the studio. Ambient miking techniques and unmuffled drums have combined to create a much "bigger" drum sound than had previously been achieved with heavily dampened, close-miked drums—especially single-headed ones. With a double-headed set, you have the option to go either way, so why not take the opportunity to experiment?*

Q. I've been playing a Ludwig stainless steel set for four years now (not professionally), and have been disappointed time after time. I've never been able to get a good sound out of them, like the sound I have heard from wood drums. I don't know a lot about tuning, and I've only changed the heads once in four years, so I don't know if it's my fault or the drums'. Also, I've heard Ludwig has discontinued these drums. Have they, and if so, why? Also, should I buy some new heads and a tuning book, and quit blaming it on the stainless steel?

S.E.
Salem, VA

A. Tuning any set of drums is always a delicate matter, and tuning a set of stainless steel drums is very *difficult. The stainless steel series was introduced during the heyday of the "power drum" movement, when volume, above a/I else, was the primary consideration. Due to the very tuning difficulty you describe, and a few other factors that reduced marketing demand very quickly, the steel sets did not remain in production very long.*

The usual problem with an all-metal drum is an overabundance of resonance (or "ring") from the shell. This cannot be affected very much by head choice, except that a head that produces a lot of resonance of its own will contribute to the overall tuning problem more than a "dead" head. You may need to "muffle" the shell itself to approximate a wood sound. You can do this by taping some sort of soft, absorbent material, such as cotton padding, foam rubber, etc., to the inside of the shell. Experiment with the amount and type of muffling, until you are successful at reducing the resonance to the degree you desire. Then, once you get the shell resonance under control, you definitely should do some research into tuning methods, including choice of head types, tension, head dampening, etc. MD *did a major feature on drumset tuning in the February '84 issue; check it out for some suggestions.*

Q. I play mostly heavy metal music, and I go through snare drum heads like crazy. I've tried many kinds of heads, but none of them will hold up. What kind of head would you recommend?

G.P.
Malta, IL

A. Obviously, you need a drumhead that is made for extremely heavy-duty use. This more or less limits your choices to the heaviest heads offered by the various head companies. Remo now offers a head designed for drum corps use that might serve your needs. It's called the PowerStroke, *and combines their twin-ply* Pinstripe *model with a* CS *sound center dot for extra reinforcement. The hoop is also strengthened to take extra tension. Evans* Heavy Duty Rock *twin-ply models (as well as their* Hydraulics *which are the same thickness with an added layer of oil between the plies) are the strongest made by that company, at 14 mils thick. Perhaps the most durable heads on the market are the Duralines, which come in three types:* Studio, Concert, *and* Magnum. *These are woven of Kevlar fibers, and are virtually unsplittable. The manufacturer claims they will remain playable even if a hole is punctured in them.*

The problem with heavy-duty heads—and this is most noticeable in the Duralines—is that they have very little "give"; they tend to feel hard and unyielding under stick impact. This gets very close to the complaint drummers have had about the playing surface of Simmons drums. Remember that with heads, as with sticks, there is a trade-off in force. With the intense impact of heavy metal drumming, there is X amount of force that must be absorbed somewhere. As heads get more and more unbreakable, and sticks—especially synthetic sticks—get more durable as well, that force is going to have to find somewhere else to go. Some of it is projected as powerful sound from your drums. But a lot of it is left over, and something *has to give. A drumhead can be viewed as a safety valve; it's* supposed *to break before* you *do. If you have heads and sticks that can't break, you're going to be placing the responsibility for absorbing shock and impact solely on your body, which costs a great deal more to repair than the amount you're spending now on replacement drumheads.*

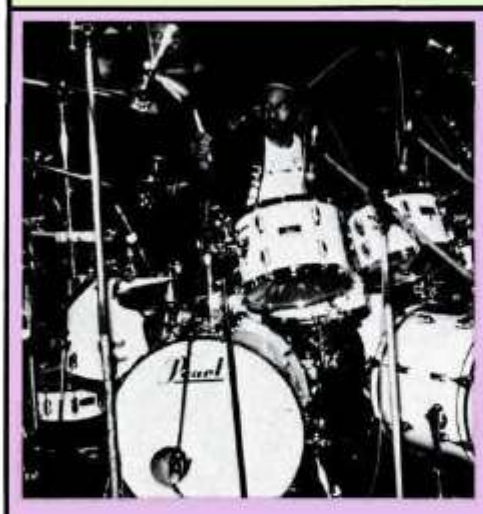
Jeff Hamilton hopes to be working on an album with the L.A. 4 right now. He's quite excited about the band's activity, because the group had been dormant since '83 until they had a couple of weeks of work last August. In the interim, however, Jeff has been very busy. Between gigs with Woody Herman, the Count Basie band, some work with Tony Bennett (subbing for Joe LaBarbara) and work with Peter Nero, Jeff jokes, "I seem to be a main sub. I told Woody I'm going to get cards printed up called 'Save a Band.' I love it, though. It's great because I don't get tied down to one particular thing and I get to play with other musicians. It's funny because I used to be the youngest one in all these groups and now, when I go back on Woody's band, I'm one of the oldest guys, so it's fun to see that transition happening. I'm playing with younger musicians who help me stay young musically. I always thought I'd want to stay with one particular job, but I'm finding that I do like this because it goes from big band to trio to jazz quintet, and I always have to be on my toes."

There are many elements to be taken into consideration when switching from a big band to, say, a trio situation. "Each band has its own groove. The Basie band has a groove that no other band has, and Woody's band has a more on-top-of-it type of feel—a more intense feel than the Basie band, which is more relaxed. When you go to a trio, you can play more on top of the groove; therefore, Woody's feel can be applied to a small-group groove, depending on what the trio situation is. Basically, the big problem is dynamics and volume level. You've got to come way down when there are only three of you. In a piano trio, there's very little, if any, amplification. With a big band like the Basie band, the legendary arrangements have been with Basie starting out as a piano trio, and then the band comes in for one chord—just a quarter note to wake everybody up—and then back down again, so you get dynamic extremes. A lot of big bands don't have those extreme dynamics. When you do go to a trio, it has to be the same intensity, but softer, so you have to find some way to get all that intensity channeled down to a *mezzo piano.* Going back to the big band recently, I had to go to a chiropractor the second day on the job. They didn't have any music stands—who's the last Basie drummer that had to read?—so I was reading the charts off the floor. You have to hit pretty hard, so I was really getting some muscle tension up in my neck. I woke up the next morning with my neck completely turned to the left and I couldn't straighten it out. With a small group there's definitely more playing room, too, because of the fewer number of people. With the big band, there are no drum solos. You get eight bars here and four bars there, but basically you're just laying down a time feel—the foundation for the band so they can build the house on top of that. When you're in a trio, you're all working together to set the foundation and build the house. Your role changes. You can play a little more loosely and not be so strict as a timekeeper."

Jeff does like to solo and defines a good solo as, "A drummer playing the song—following the chord progression of a song. A lot of times it's like turning the drummer loose. But I try to think like a horn player when I play. I'll be singing different bebop lines and thinking the tune. If we're playing 'Ornithology,' I'll play the form of the tune, the number of bars that are in the tune, and maybe pick out fragments of the melody to insert into the solo to let everyone know where I'm at so they can come in at the end of two or three or however many choruses I take. If it's a 16-bar tune, play 16 bars and remember what tune you're playing, because that can influence your solo and make you think more musically. I think one of the greatest at that was Shelly Manne. Max Roach and Shelly are my two idols as far as drum solos are concerned, because they did think like horn players. I never got lost listening to those guys and I knew they were thinking the song."

After having recorded his last independent project in 1983, Jeff says for now he's happy being a sideman. "I'm sort of a leader in groups, even as a sideman. I don't try to be overbearing and I know how to be a sideman, but there are times when nobody takes control of what's going on and I just do it with my playing. As far as taking my own band out, I did my own record and took my own band out, but it's hard to break in with the kind of music we're playing as a semi-name. I had a tour booked with a quintet. All but two people canceled out, because it was around the time of the jazz festivals up North and people were worried about having too much of it. I really could have let it get to me, but I didn't. I decided that, as long as I could play in whatever situation I'm in, it's okay. I'm enjoying what I'm doing."

—Robyn Flans



Kenwood Dennard has been keeping himself involved in a wide variety of activities lately. He's been maintaining a full teaching schedule at New York's Drummers Collective, while at the same time performing with such artists as Harry Belafonte, Jon Lucien and Jaco Pastorius.Recently Kenwood has also been holding down the drum chair in the Tom Pierson big band, a 16-piece fusionesque jazz band that has been performing each Monday night at the Jazz Center of New York. The band, according to Kenwood, "... reflects a little of what Don Ellis did, and what came after. It's a little more up-to-date, with more of a groove involved. I play with Anthony Jackson, who's a pioneer on the six-string bass. He can go lower than other bass players, and all you can say about the rhythm section—in fact all of that band's music—is that it's *solidl"*

Perhaps the most unique project occupying Kenwood's time is his one-man creation, the Meta-Rhythmic Orchestra. This involves the use of a 39-piece drum-and-percussion set, two keyboard synthesizers, a headset vocal microphone and various electronic effects. Kenwood performs his own compositions, as well as those of other noted jazz artists, and the totality of the performance is amazing. According to Kenwood, "I've been working on the MRO since 1979; it's taken that long to develop fully. I believe that a large part of music is orchestration, and that requires instrumentation. I've studied piano for 20 years and drums for 19. I studied at the Manhattan College of Music, and I studied composition at the Fountainbleu School of Fine Arts in France. The skills I possess combine to make the Meta-Rhythmic Orchestra possible, and the different experiences that I go through are reflected in my music." After completing an MRO video entitled *39 Steps To Drumming* in '84, Kenwood recently performed at S.I.R. Studios, and again at 7th Avenue South, both in New York City, to audiences mainly comprised of drummers and other musicians who sat amazed at his display of independence. He played bass lines on the keyboards with his left hand and intricate drum patterns with his right, often alternating that with lead lines performed with his right hand while his left foot put the

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backbeat in on a snare drum specially fitted into his left bass drum. If the term "one-man-band" evokes images of some sort of overblown vaudevillian, forget it; this is a highly talented individual displaying an impressive array of skills.

Later this year, Kenwood will be playing with Jaco Pastorius in Martinique, in what he terms "a duet format. That should be wide open, musically." He's also doing clinics for Pearl and Zildjian, as well as working on his own compositions and books. As he puts it, "I'm really blessed. Just to be a musician, making my living doing what I like is really fun."
—Rick Van Horn

When we spoke, **Leonard Haze** was hoping that by this month he would be relaxing at home after a rigorous year. In 1984, Y&T recorded *Mean Streak,* after which they toured before going back into the studio again. After *In Rock We Trust* was released, more travel was in order as the group toured into the new year.

According to Haze, the main ingredient for Y&T's drummer is lots of energy, because the show, in addition to the schedule, takes an abundance of stamina. "You've got to play real loud," he says. "I do a lot of bass drum fills, but they're single bass drum fills. There are a lot of accents, pushes and pops. It's basically staying simplistic but being complex. It's the less-is-more syndrome—trying to hold it all together, because it gets to be mass insanity on stage a lot of times. I'd say that, more than anything with this band, I have to try to keep the show flowing. Our tunes, if they're a little too quick or a little too slow, lose something. So I really have to concentrate on the time and holding everyone together."

The road is so strenuous that Leonard says he usually loses about 30 pounds during a tour. "Sometimes having a little bit of weight helps at the beginning of the tour. I don't really exercise much, but I practice about an hour a day, just going through the rudiments I know and different exercises to keep my hands in shape. I don't really take good care of my body, but I find that by the end of the tour, I'm in really good shape. Then it's time to kick back and do nothing for a while, so I let the tour get me back into shape.

"I never really pace, which is kind of strange," Leonard continues. "I just kind of go for it from beginning to end as hard as I possibly can. I'm usually pretty sick by the time we're done playing. I feel like I've run a marathon, so I go through bottles and bottles of liquids. I figure, though, you've got to come out of the hole smoking, and once you come out with that, you have to keep that pace up and try to build the level of energy. There are places in the set where I can catch my breath a little bit, but I've always believed that it costs those kids a lot of money to buy a ticket, so I've got to give it to them from the beginning. Also, if I start off holding back, I never really loosen up, so I go for it as strong as I can from the start and catch my breath between songs. During the guitar solo, I can go back and drink a quart of *Gatorade* and plop down on the stage in front of the fan." *—Robyn Flans*

Someone tired of being a sideman is **Carmine Appice,** who formed his own group, King Kobra, recently. In fact, their debut album, *Ready To Strike,* will be released this month. "It was time, after playing for Ozzy [Osbourne], Ted [Nugent], Rod [Stewart] and all that stuff. You can only do that so long if you're trying to do something with your career. I never conceived of myself as a backup musician. I was always in a band up until I was with Rod Stewart. When I was on tour with Ozzy, I noticed that Motley Crue were doing real good, and they had a great image and were a great band. Image is really important today. While I wasn't thinking of leaving Ozzy at the time, I thought, 'When I do my own thing, I'm going to do the opposite of Motley Crue and be the dark-haired person and have everyone else blonde.' When I did leave the Ozzy tour, I realized there were a lot of heavy rock fans who were still into what I was doing and thought, 'The hell with it. I'm going to put a band together with brand new guys who are hungry and want to kick ass.' "

He spent from March last year until the end of July hunting for the right musicians and recording demos even before the lineup was completed. Capitol signed them and the band went into the studio in October with Spencer Proffer (Quiet Riot) producing along with Carmine. About the material, some co-written by him, Carmine says, "It's a cross between Zeppelin, Journey and Foreigner meets Queen. It's got the big drum sound and we're using Simmons and some different electronic echo things on the drums. My vocalist, Mark Free is amazing—soulful as hell and we're also sending him to gymnast school. We're going to be putting on a real show!"
—Robyn Flans

Max Weinberg is in the middle of the year-plus tour with Bruce Springsteen. Immediately following Joe Jackson's recent tour, **Gary Burke** went to London to work on the Expression's debut LP for A&M. The album was released last month. On the heels of a U.S. tour, Shadowfax, with drummer Stuart Nevitt, is currently in Japan. **Chris Crockarell** touring with the *Ice Capades.* **Chris Slade** has joined Jimmy Page's new group, the Firm, and they are due to release their first album and tour the States shortly. **Jerry Marotta** on Andrew Cunningham's debut LP; also look for him on Peter Gabriel's current project. **Frankie Banali** on tour in Japan with Quiet Riot. **Prairie Prince** on Chris Isaak's debut Warner Brothers album, as well as **Jim Keltner** on one track. **Marvin Kanaret** did drum tracks for Turner Broadcasting Cable Music Channel as well as *Other Worlds* segment, "Rock 'N' Roll Suicide," which aired a couple of months back. He also worked on Janice Ian's album which should be out shortly, and he is working live with Burton Averre. Congratulations to **Mike Stobie** and his wife Mary on the birth of their son, James William. **Susan Evans** is heard on the music for *The Cosby Show.* **Rob Gottfried** ("Rob the Drummer" from *Sesame Street)* recently toured Japan giving clinics, lectures and seminars on percussion. **Gary Bruer** is now drumming in a group fronted by Lester Chambers (formerly of the Chambers Brothers) on vocals and harmonica, and featuring Harvey Brooks (formerly of the Electric Flag) on bass. The group has been touring the U.S., and will spend the month of February in London. A tour of Japan is in the planning stages for May of '85. **Brad Dutz,** Dallas-based percussionist, has joined Maynard Ferguson's big band. *—Robyn Flans*

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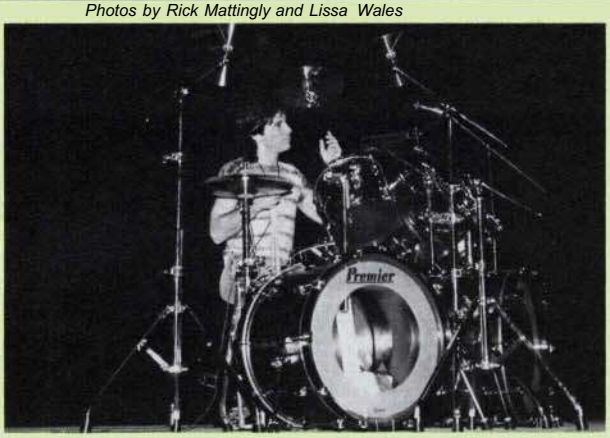
PASIC—ANN ARBOR

This year's Percussive Arts Society International Convention, held on the campus of the University of Michigan, followed in the tradition of previous PAS conventions by offering something for everyone. In addition to prominent artists such as Vic Firth, Morris Lang, Leigh Howard Stevens, Nexus, Friedman & Samuels, Alan Abel, and Ralph Hardimon, a number of prominent drumset artists were also in attendance. Most of the major manufacturers were also in attendance, giving convention goers a chance to check out all of the latest products, and discuss them with representatives of the companies.

If there's any fault to be found with the way PAS conventions are handled, it's that there are usually two clinics going on at the same time. One shouldn't have to choose between two great artists such as Leigh Howard Stevens and Jack DeJohnette; one should be able to hear both of them. But this year that very choice had to be made, and there were a number of other similar conflicts. The PAS is to be congratulated for bringing so many prominent drummers and percussionists together, but they should take steps to ensure that convention attendees have the opportunity to hear as many of the artists as possible.—*Rick Mattingly*

Photos by Rick Mattingly and Lissa Wales



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Bernard Purdie

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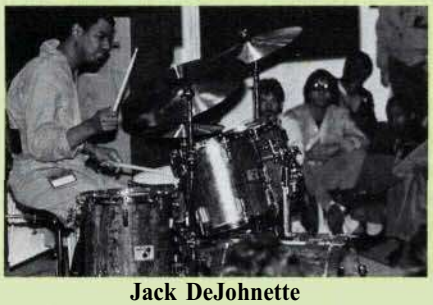
Jim Chapin



Jack DeJohnette

Billy Cobham and Susan Evans

Harvey Mason

Vinnie Colaiuta

John Robinson

Jack DeJohnette and Peter Erskine

Additional coverage of the PASIC can be found in the March issue of Modern Percussionist *magazine.*

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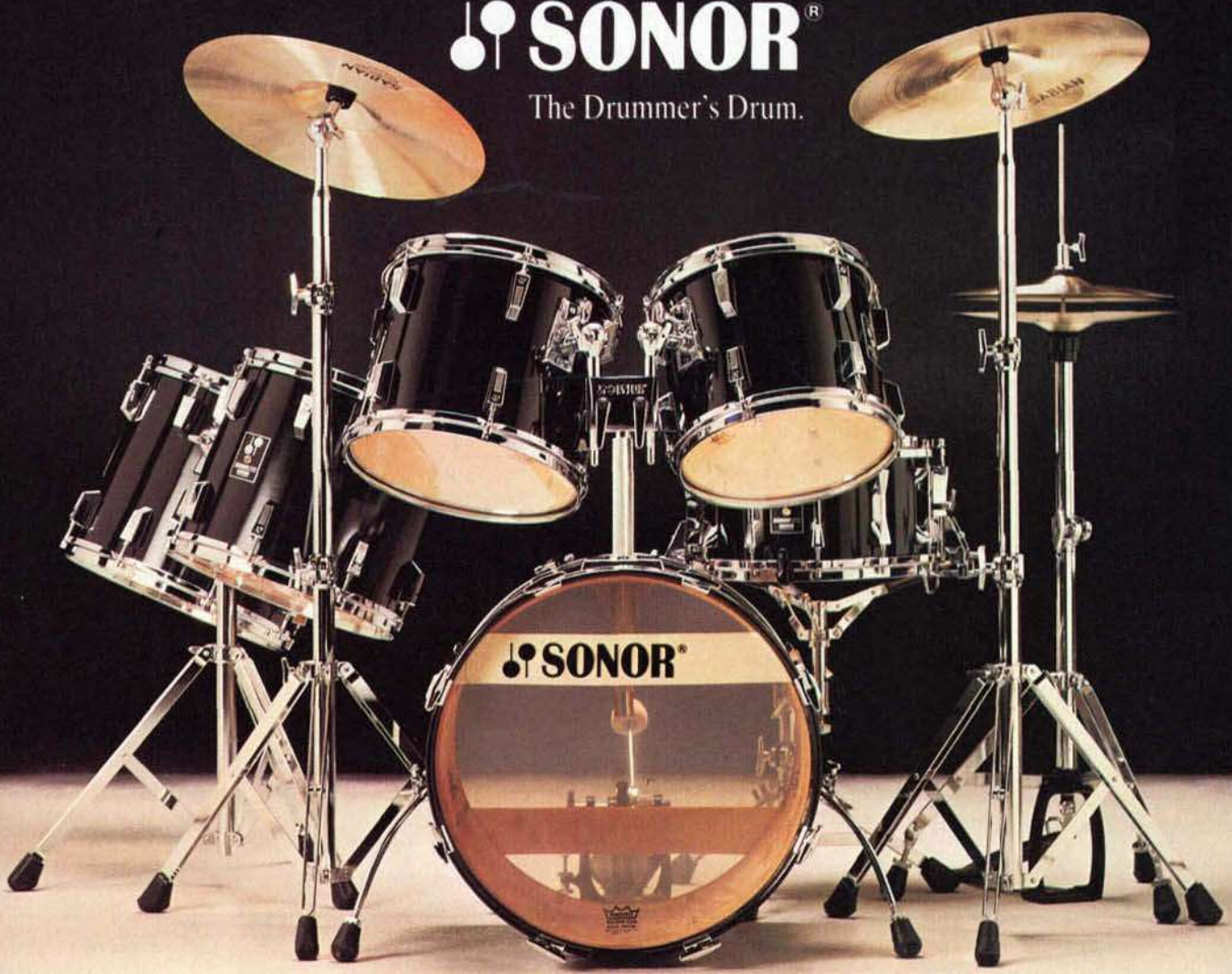

REMO/TAMA HANDS-ON DAY

Skyline College in San Bruno, California, was buzzing recently as Steve Smith, Louie Bellson and Billy Cobham performed and answered questions from the 1,000 or so drummers in attendance at the Remo/Tama Hands-On Day held there. Questions were posed about tuning, the first big break, applying rudiments to the set, muffling the drums, and equipment problems. Although there were some good answers, what really got this crowd excited was the playing. Proving that you can't have too much of a good thing, Steve, Louie and Billy performed a three-way jam, and the audience was soon whooping and hollering.

The main theater at the junior college was used for the performing and lecturing. A room downstairs was used for the "hands-on" part of the day, and contained half-a-dozen different sets, from Remo's *Junior Pro* and full-size *PTS* sets to the huge Tama kit that Cobham plays. Although general reaction to the "hands-on" portion of the day was that it was "too hectic and loud," due to the proximity of all the sets, the appearances by the three performers more than made up for any negative impressions.

Bellson, who told the crowd he had been playing for 57 years, was an inspiration. He talked about the importance of experience ("the water and sunshine needed to grow"), and said, "You've got to eat well so you can sustain yourself and be playing when you're 98." During the finale, with Cobham on one flank and Smith on the other giving it all they had, Bellson hung tough. "The greatest collaboration of talent I've ever seen in one place," commented one ecstatic young drummer. The Santa Clara Vanguard Drum Line and Rob Carson also entertained during the day. Door prizes included a Tama drumset and other products. Tickets to the event were given out free at local music stores, and with three drumming giants on the bill, Remo and Tama were ensured a large and enthusiastic crowd to view their newest wares. *—Robin Tolleson*

DRUMMERS COLLECTIVE ADDS ARTISTS

Andy Newmark and Kenwood Dennard have each recently conducted Master Classes at Drummers Collective in New York City. Other drummers who will be holding similar classes in the near future include Mike Clark and Lenny White. Mike, known for his contribution to Herbie Hancock's *Thrust* album, will also be available for private instruction. Drummers Collective is also pleased to welcome Keith Copeland to its staff. Keith is a well-respected player, having toured with such diverse artists as Stevie Wonder, The Heath Brothers, and Billy Taylor. For more information, contact Drummers Collective, 541 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10011, or call (212) 741-0091.

RDSI NOW DURALINE INDUSTRIES, INC.

Research Development Systems, Inc., has sold its Duraline, Syndrum and Dragon Drums divisions to Duraline Industries, Inc., a new corporation which is wholly owned by Bob Scott, president of both RDSI and Duraline. Scott stated that even though Duraline will continue to improve their products, the main thrust of the company is now sales and service, as opposed to research, as it was 11 years ago when the corporation was formed. Duraline Industries will remain at their present address: 11300 Rush Street, S. El Monte, CA 91733.

SHAUGHNESSY ENDORSES CYMBAL SPRINGS

Tonight Show drummer Ed Shaughnessy is now using and endorsing Aquarian's *Cymbal Springs.* According to Ed, "The springs are great. Now I can hit four or five crashes in a row on the same cymbal and it never gets out of control. The cymbal actually moves in rhythm with the way you play. And, if you play hard, they help to lengthen the life of your cymbals by absorbing much of the shock." *Heavy Duty Cymbal Springs* are for crash cymbals up to 18". *Super Cymbal Springs* are for ride cymbals, heavy cymbals and for mounting Chinese cymbals upside down. For information write or call: Aquarian Accessories Corp., 1140 N. Tustin Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92807, (714) 632-0230.

GRETSCH ADDS BROOKS AND CARRIGAN TO CLINICIAN STAFF

The Gretsch Company recently announced the addition of two leading percussion recording artists in Nashville, Clyde Brooks and Jerry Carrigan, to their endorsement roster.

Brooks is considered one of the busiest studio drummers, for most of the major pop and country acts, recording in Nashville. He has also involved himself as a producer in new projects and is gaining additional recognition in "drumming circles" because of his vast array of studio experience in all studio markets. His articles have appeared in past issues of *Percussive Notes,* the magazine of the Percussive Arts Society, and he will be a contributor to Gretsch's educational *Drummer's Aid Pack* scheduled for release in 1985.

Carrigan is often referred to as "the drummer most in demand" by Nashville producers. From soundtracks, radio, jingles, or top hit recording artists, you have heard the "Carrigan sound." He has been associated with John Denver since 1981, as well as being featured on the hit recordings of such artists as Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton, Kenny Rogers, and Jerry Reed.

Complete details on clinic availability for Clyde Brooks and Jerry Carrigan can be obtained from Gretsch Marketing Services, P.O. Box 1250, Gallatin, TN 37066, (615) 452-0083.

SIMMONS SDS 1985 CLINIC TOUR TO FEATURE TIM ROOT

Simmons Group Centre has announced that Simmons Pro Centers throughout the U.S. will be the sites of a comprehensive series of Simmons drum clinics. The seminars will be given by Simmons staff clinician, "Texas" Tim Root. Tim has performed with Andy West (Dixie Dregs), Tony Campise (Stan Kenton) and Emmett Chapman. His unique skills as a drum synthesizer programmer have been used by groups such as Herbie Hancock and Crosby, Stills & Nash, as well as drumming greats like Harvey Mason, Alex Acuna and Jim Keltner. Tim's clinic topics include Basic Functions of Simmons Drum Synthesis and Programming, Electronic vs. Acoustic Drumming, and Use of Simmons for Practice, Concert and Recording Work. For more information, contact Simmons at 23917 Craftsman Road, Calabasas, CA 91302, (818)884-2653.

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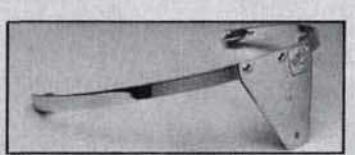

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JUST DRUMS

GON BOPS ROCKET

Gon Bops of California, Inc. has designed and manufactured a new series of *Rocket Stand Adapters* to mount one, two or three congas (or standard drums) on their standard *2CS-76* double conga stand. This new design allows the congas to be tilted in the direction of the drummer, and puts the congas in a horizontal position—a perfect addition for the drummer playing a drumset. The drums can be adjusted to any cant or height, for ease in playing with the hands, mallets or drumsticks. For further information and free color brochure, call or write Gon Bops of California, Inc., 2302 E. 38th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90058, (213) 589-5211.

THOR SPECIAL EDITION PRO DRUM OUTFIT

The Omni Division of St. Louis Music Supply Company recently introduced the newest addition to its popular Thor drum line, the Thor *Special Edition* five-piece drum outfit. This outfit features extra deep (11 x 12 and 12 x 13) Thor *Dynatoms* for more volume and greater range, 16 x 22 bass drum, and a 6 1/2 X 14 deluxe chrome snare. Thor super-duty, double-braced stands and hardware, including hi-hat, special low-profile snare stand, cymbal and cymbal boom stands, are also provided. The Thor *Special Edition* pro drum outfit is available in either a jet black or wine red finish, at a price suited to the student or semi-pro drummer. For further information, contact St. Louis Music Supply Company, 1400 Ferguson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63133, or call (314) 727-4512.

DRUMMERS ON FILM AND VIDEO

Rhapsody Films now offers two short films, available in 16mm or on both VHS and Beta video cassettes, displaying the talents of two historic jazz drummers. *Born To Swing* recaptures the richness of swing music in general and the delights of the Count Basie Band in particular. The band's greatest soloists, including drummer Jo Jones, are joined in this film for an impromptu session by other top jazz players of the swing era. Recollections by Gene Krupa and others round out this portrait of the Basie Band.

After Hours is a vintage jazz film featuring Coleman Hawkins/sax, Roy Eldridge/trumpet, Milt Hinton/bass, Johnny Guarnieri/piano, and Cozy Cole on drums.

For further information on these films, contact Rhapsody Films, Inc., 30 Charlton Street, New York, NY 10014, or call (212)243-0152.

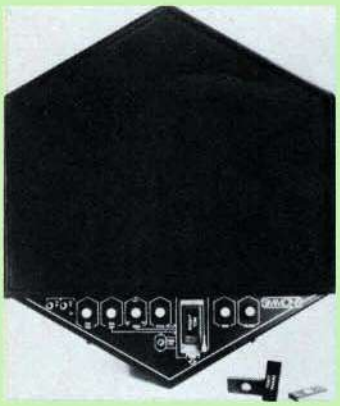
SLOBEAT CABLE HI-HAT

Slobeat Percussion of Evergreen, Colorado, recently introduced their new *Cable-Hat* hi-hat stand to the drum market. The *Cable-Hat* utilizes a foot pedal placed on the left side of the drumset where a traditional hi-hat stand is placed. The pedal is attached to an aircraft-type cable assembly which runs along the floor and attaches to the hi-hat stand placed on the right side of the set.

"The drumset is the only musical instrument in existence that is played backwards" said Mike Stobie, president of Slobeat. "I'm speaking specifically of crossing the right hand over the left hand to play the hi-hat. Our new *Cable-Hat* solves this problem. This new hi-hat design allows more freedom and independence than ever thought possible using a traditional hi-hat stand."

For more information contact Slobeat Percussion, Inc., P.O. Box 175, Evergreen, CO 80439, or call (303) 674-4043.

SIMMONS SDS1 DIGITAL DRUMPAD



For acoustic or electronic drummers seeking to expand their creative options, Simmons has introduced the *SDS1*. Also designed for use as a multiple-pad, digital drumkit, the *SDS1* is a self-contained electronic drumpad with a digital sound source and player-changeable memory chips. Drummers can choose from an extensive library of Simmons snare drum, tom-tom, cymbal, hand clap and sound effects, or, by utilizing the new *SDS EPB* unit, they can create their own digital sounds.

The *SDS1* operates on four 1.5-volt batteries or an optional AC adapter, and has controls for adjusting pitch, bend, run time, sensitivity and volume on the pad itself. The bend function can be adjusted up or down, and the run function controls a sound generator that can be used to create "sample and hold" effects or a "round-the-kit" fill. With a 1/4" phone-plug cable, the *SDS1* can be connected directly to an amplifier, PA system or recording board. Available in black or white, the *SDS1* comes with a choice of E-PROM, multi-clamp adapter and mounting arm. For further information contact Simmons at 23917 Craftsman Road, Calabasas, CA 91302, (818)884-2653.

DRUMFIRE ELECTRONIC SENSOR SYSTEM

The Music People, Inc., now offer *Drumfire,* an electronic unit designed to be activated by acoustic drums. The unit features five electronic sensors which are attached to the drummer's present acoustic set. Each of the five channels is independently mixed for sensitivity, oscillator decay, noise decay, sweep, volume, balance, pitch, and left & right pan. According to Melanie Schiffman of The Music People, Inc., "The variety of sound is almost unlimited, and you can balance your set before it gets to the mixer."

State-of-the-art electronics is presented in a compact, solid metal housing measuring only 13" x 9" x 2". *Drumfire* has in/out jacks for each channel as well as a master jack for mono or stereo output. For further information contact The Music People, Inc., P.O. Box 648, West Hartford, CT 06107, or call (800) 243-2888.

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Alannah Currie/Thompson Twins

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Bill Bruford/King Crimson

For further details please write to: Drummer Service, 460 Atlas Street, Brea, CA 92621

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MARCH'S MD

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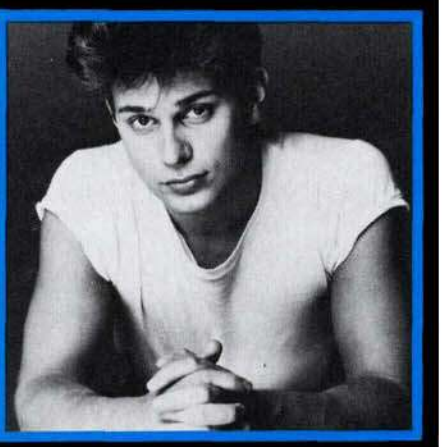

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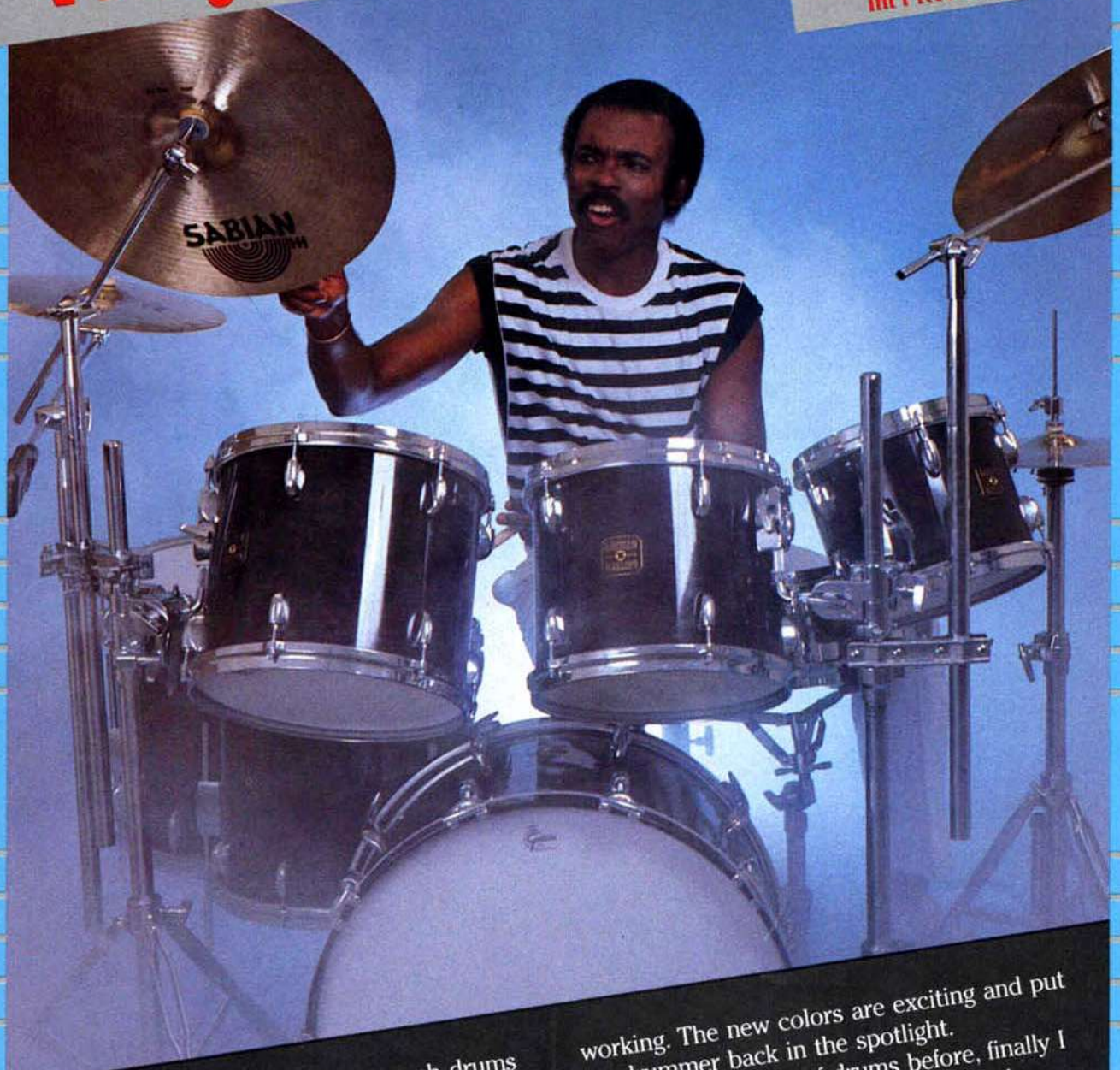

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If you're looking for a hi hat sound with a warmer tone that adds another dimension to your set-up, try the distinctively different K. Zildjian hi hat.

amir

The higher-pitched Amir hi hats produce a fast, shimmering sound which blends well with electronic drums and mics well in the studio. Zildjian's new Amir Power Hats (patent pending) give you a quick response and added projection for live playing situations.

IMPULSE

Created to cut right through the loudest amplification, the raw and unrefined Impulse Power Hats combine incredible volume with the ultimate projection of the rhythmic pulse.

Experiment with different hi hats to open up new possibilities as you discover your own "signature" rhythm sound. Take chances. Try "cross-matching" different top and bottom cymbals for unique combinations of tone and projection–like a New Beat top with an Impulse bottom or a K top with a Quick Beat bottom. And write for a Zildjian White paper to find out why our Hi Hats are musical instruments and not *just* time keepers:
Avedis Zildjian Company,
Longwater Drive,
Norwell Mass 02061 USA.

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